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THE NAKED GOSPEL.

DISCOVERING

I. What was the Gospel which our LORD and His Apostles Preached.

II. What Additions and Alterations latter Ages have made in it.

III. What Advantages and Damages have thereupon ensued.

PART I. *Of FAITH.*

By a True Son of the Church of England.
Arthur Bury DD.

Printed in the Year 1690.

Thomas Foxe, His Book lost 2:6

1706

THE

PREFACE.

THAT the Gospel, which at its first appearance in the World made such great and speedy Conquests over its opposite Powers, should in these latter Ages be so far from making such large strides, yea, or the least step of further progress, that it hath been driven out of many of the Provinces it had gained; this is by Some objected against the Providence of God, and the Truth of the Gospel, and by the Best look't upon with wonder.

Time was, when the Fathers and Apologists of the Christian Churches pleaded This for an Evidence of our Lord's being the true Messiah, that in him the Promise was fulfilled, which gave him the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. And particularly St. Augustine thus argued for the Truth of his Resurrection, the Corner-stone of the Christian Faith: The same Spirit of God which foretold the Resurrection of Christ, foretold also, that the Doctrine thereof should be publickly professed and believed in the World: and One was altogether as unlikely as the Other: but the Latter we see in all Ages since Christ's Death accomplished, why then should we doubt of the Former?

And if we duly consider how incredible it was, that a poor, despised, persecuted, and at last crucified vagabond, should by the preaching of a few Fishermen, so prevail over the opposite Powers of the World, that the greatest Princes should place his Cross above their Crowns as their best Ornament and protection; This singly considered, must claim a belief, that as it is marvellous in our eyes, so it was the Lord's doing. If from the Power of the Sword we pass to that of the Pen, and consider, that Twelve ignorant Fishermen baffled the celebrated Learning of the Scribes among the Jews, and the Philosophers among the Greeks; These Triumphs of the Ignorant over the Learned, will appear no less admirable than those of the Poor over Princes: And when to this doubly wonderful Event, we add the no less wonderful Prediction, which at the time of its publication must appear no less Mad than now Miraculous; it must seem equally incredible that this concourse of so many wonders, should be the effect of less than Divine Power and Wisdom: and consequently Such a Prophecy So fulfilled, must evidence the Author to be what he declared himself, the Son of God.

YET should one of Mahomet's Priests now mount the same Chair, might he not with (at least) the same Force, press the same Argument in behalf of that lewd Impostor? Might he not argue, that the wonderful Progress of the Gospel was indeed a powerful Evidence of its Divine Authority; but withal it must be an equally powerful one for that of the Alcoran. For as the miraculous Victories of a fugitive people over the Canaanites, join'd with the Prophecies which foretold them, were a good Evidence of the Divine Authority of Moses and his Laws; and the Victories of the Gospel over that Law, were an Evidence of the greater Authority of the Gospel; so the Victories of the Alcoran over that Gospel, must be an Evidence, that as the Religion of Moses was better than that of the Canaanites, and the Religion of Christ better than that of Moses; so must the Religion of Mahomet be better than that of Christ.

Thus may a Mahometan either disarm us of St. Augustin's Argument, or Retort it against us: For either it is of no force at all, or of so much more force for Mahomet, by how much more he hath prevailed over the Churches of Christ.

AND that it is of no force at all, some may infer from the contrary conducts of the Planters of those Two Religions: For the Gospel shed no Blood but of its own Professors; kindled no Fires but those that devoured its own Martyrs; dethroned no Prince but the Prince of the Power of the Air, nor Him neither by any other Weapons but Preaching and Suffering: Whereas Mahomet and his Followers propagated his Doctrines, together with their Domonions, by Fire and Sword: And since this latter way is no less contrary to the Nature of God, than to the Precepts, as well as the way of Planting of the Gospel; since its Author was no other than a lewd brainsick Scoundrel, and his Doctrines (as far as they are His) no better than extravagant Whimses, or lewd Panders to Lust; Such a Progress of Such a Religion, is so far from an Argument of its Divine Authority, that it is far less impious to impute its Prosperity, either to meer Chance, or (as some Astrological Fancies do) to the motion of the Heavens, (carrying Religion and Learning from the Eastern to the Western Regions of the World,) than to accuse God's Providence of Injustice to his Truth, and the Souls of the Inhabitants of so great a part of Christendom.

By such Discourses do some plead, not only against the Christian, but All Religion: And those who dare not thus Arraign or Renèg God's Providence, cannot avoid admiring its Conduct, as no less contrary to that loving kindness which the Gospel proclaims, than to the means whereby it was first planted.

BUT if on the other side the Modern Gospel differ as much from the Primitive in its Doctrines, as it doth in its Successes; If it be so changed, that were any Apostle to return into the world, he would be so far from Owning, that he would not be able to Understand it; the Change of God's Providence in such a Change of the Gospel, will be so far from Invalidating, that it will Double the force of St. Augustin's *Argument.*

For it proceeded not upon the single Topick of Prosperity, but upon the concourse of an admirable Event, with an admirable Prophecy; and its strength is now doubled by the addition of another like concourse of a contrary Event, with a contrary Prediction: So it is thus unhappily improved, The same Spirit of God which foretold, that the Gospel should be preached over the whole world, and performed it by the Ministry of a few Fishermen; foretold also to one of the first-born Churches, and thereby to all others, that if she repented not, he would remove her Candlestick out of its place; and this was at that time no less unlikely, than it had been that ever it should be placed there; yet this we see done, and that by a quite cenrrary Ministry: *by the Sword of a base Slave and his few Followers, and by Doctrines as weak as that Sword when first unsheathed, and lewd as those Rogues that managed it; how then can we doubt, but the One as well as the Other were ordered by the same Providence which foretold them?*

If we yet doubt, let us consider particulars. First, the Spirit did not threaten to Extinguish the Light, but only to remove the Candlestick out of its place; *and accordingly, the Light is not quite Extinguished but only Removed; the Gospel hath not Lost ground, but Exchanged; for* America *amply repaireth the Losses sustained in* Europe, Asia *and* Africk.

Again, it is observable, that the Candlestick was thus removed by the light of its own Candle; For whereas the Western *Churches were terribly overrun by a multitude of Heathen Nations, their Religion as certainly prevailed over the Minds of the Conquerors, as the Invader's Sword did over their Country; the Religion of* Mahomet, *on the contrary, ever kept pace with his and his Followers Swords, and where it subdued the Country, was sure to vanquish the Gospel. If we examine the Reason of this Difference, we shall find, that the Idolatry of the Heathen could not withstand the Power of the Gospel, because it had nothing of its Light; but* Mahomet *professed all the Articles of the Christian Faith, and declared himself not an Apostate, but Reformer; pretending to purify it from the Corruptions wherewith it had been defiled, and perfect it with Additionals, he framed such a Jargon as appeared most serviceable to his Ends, and most suitable to his Lusts.*

So, *from the prosperity of the* Alcoran, *we have an Argument for the Divinity of the Gospel, as invincible against all power but what was derived from it self; and for the Justice of God's Providence, which as it found Corruptions in the Churches of Christ, sufficient to provoke his Judgments; so did it truth enough in the* Alcoran, *to prefer That above all other Religions, to the Honour of his Sword.*

WHETHER Mahomet, *or Christian Doctors have more corrupted the Gospel, is not so plain by the light of Scripture, as it is by that of Experience, that the Latter gave Occasion, Encouragement, and Advantage to the Former. For when by nice and hot disputes (especially concerning the* Second *and* Third *Persons of the Trinity) the minds of the whole people had been long confounded, and by the then late stablishment of Image-worship, the scandal was encreased; so that to Vulgar Understandings the Doctrine of the Trinity appeared no less guilty of Polytheism, than that of Image-worship did of Idolatry; when by mutual uncharitableness either party persecuted the other, both with spiritual and temporal Weapons; when thus all mens minds were perplexed with doubts, and scared with threats, so that they knew not What they were to Believe; and thereby so diverted from true Piety, that they cared not How they Lived; Then was there a tempting opportunity offered to the Impostor, and he laid hold on it, to set up himself for a Reformer of such Corruptions, as were both too Gross to be justified, and too Visible to be denied.*

This well considered, will admonish us to turn our complaints from God's Providence to those second causes; which as they provoked our Lord to divorce himself from his Churches, so did they Encourage and Impower the False Prophet to seduce and ruine them.

LET us therefore now proceed to compare the Primitive Gospel with the Modern, not by Retail in Particular Doctrines, (which were a work too great for the Longest and Busiest Life,) but by the Great, in General, whence the Particulars proceeded: For if it appear that our Lord's and his Apostles teaching, were both for Matter and Manner, apt to Prevail; but what hath since been added, be apt only to perplex or worse; then ought we to impute the decay of the Christian Religion, not to any defect of God's Providence, because it doth not change the Nature of things, but to those who have perverted the Gospel.

Let us then will consider (what is most worthy our consideration) that the Gospel which our Lord and his Apostles preached, in the way wherein

they

they preached it, was ſutable to the meaneſt Capacities, and agreeable to the Light of Nature; *Eaſie to be underſtood by the Weakeſt, and worthy to be embraced by the Wiſeſt.*

When the Baptiſt ſent two of his Diſciples ſaying, Art thou he that ſhould come or do we look for another? *Our Lord gave not his anſwer by one word, Poſitive or Negative, but by ſeveral ſigns, whereby the Baptiſt might ſpell out his mind; and among them he put in* preaching of the Goſpel to the Poor, *equal to his greateſt miracles; and we muſt have very odd conceits of his wiſdom, if he ſuted not his Teaching to the Capacities of his hearers, that the one might be as plain as the other. As he choſe the Poor for his Diſciples, ſo did he afterward for his Apoſtles; and whereas, to prevent the ſcandal that might thence ariſe, he added to their Society a* choſen veſſel, *no leſs eminent in Learning, than They were in Simplicity; This great man of Chriſt profeſſed it both his Duty and his Practice, to imitate That* man of God, *that ſhrunk his full grown limbs, to the little ones of the child, which he was to raiſe to life: That it was his* Duty *he declareth* 1 Cor. 1. 17. Chriſt ſent me to preach the Goſpel, not with wiſdom of words: *And that it was his* Practice *Ch.* 2. 13. We ſpeak not the words which mans wiſdom teacheth, but which the holy Ghoſt teacheth πνευματικὰ πνευματικοῖς συγκρίνοντες, *ſuiting ſpiritual words to ſpiritual things, and both to ſpiritual perſons.*

And upon this account he glorieth, 2 Cor. 4. 4. If our Goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, leſt the light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt who is the image of God ſhould ſhine into them. *The light of the Goſpel is like that of the Sun, moſt Powerful, as moſt Beautiful, when moſt Naked; and he had not clouded it with any of his human learning, but preached it with ſuch plainneſs, that if it prevailed not, the fault muſt lye not in the Obſcurity of his Doctrines, but in the Cataracts which had not only* dimm'd, *but* blinded *the eyes of unbelievers.*

But this Plainnneſs which he Gloried in, ſome Others Deſpi ed; they diſdained this Nakedneſs as Poverty, this Simplicity they derided as Ignorance. The Gn ſticks boaſted more Knowledge, and rivaled the Apoſtles under pretence of diſcovering greater Myſteries, ſo to draw diſciples from the plain preaching miniſters of a ſimple Goſpel.

Of theſe Rivals did he no leſs complain, than of all other Perſecutors: and of the Corinthians *he was the more jealous, becauſe they were a people rich, idle, and learned: And this he declareth* 2 Cor. 11. 3. *Their City, was for it's pleaſures and plenty, like* Paradiſe: *It's Inhabitants, for liguriſhneſs after knowledg, like* Eve: *the Gnoſticks, in their inſinuations, like the* Serpent: *and he feared leſt the ſucceſs ſhould continue the parallel; by corrupting their minds from the* ſimplicity which is in Chriſt: *whether he meant Simplicity of Mind, requiſite to a Believer, or ſimplicity of Doctrine to be believed; Either of theſe were a miſchief worthy to be feared: Simplicity of mind is it's beauty, as was* Eve's *Nakedneſs in her Innocency: and Simplicity of Doctrine is the Glory of the Goſpel, as is the nakedneſs of the Sun in it's brightneſs: He feared leſt they ſhould by the inſinuations of the Gnoſticks be aſhamed of the Former, and thereby the Later ſhould degenerate from a pleaſant fruitful Garden, to a Boſcage of Fruitleſs Entangling Doctrines. He goeth on, and declareth that the Gnoſtick mode of dreſſing the Goſpel in new doctrines, did not Adorn but Diſguiſe it, ſo as to make it appear quite another thing:* If he that cometh preach another Jeſus whom we have not preached, or ye receive another Spirit which ye have not received, or another Goſpel which ye have not accepted, (*what then?*) you might well bear with Him, *ſaith our Tranſlation, without any warrant from the Apoſtle's Words, and in plain defiance to his Deſign; for his diſcourſe plainly diſſwadeth them from it: and therefore whereas the Greek expreſſeth not the Perſon to be born with; Reaſon requireth we ſhould underſtand it, not of the Seducers, but of Himſelf, who impleadeth them: And could we read the words interrogatorily* (could you well bear with him?) *this would render them, both more pungent, and more conſonant to what he writeth* Gal. 1. 6. &c. *It is* Another Goſpel, *yet it is* Not Another: *Not another, becauſe the firſt truths are reteined; yet it is Another, becauſe perverted by Innovations. If there be ſomething preached* παρ' ὃ, Beſides *or* Beyond *what himſelf had preached, the additionals make it Another.*

And ſee to what Height he carrieth the Suppoſition! and with what Heat he condemneth it! If we, or an Angel from heaven preach any other goſpel than what you have received (*what then? let him be Rejected, or Deſpiſed? yea*) let him be Accurſed: *Nor thus ſatisfied, he repeateth it again:* What I have ſaid, that I ſay again. If *&c. From this zeal of the Apoſtle thus Denouncing, yea thus Inculcating, ſo ſevere a cenſure, we are invited to obſerve.*

1. It is poſſible the Goſpel may be ſo Diſguiſed by innovations, that though it ſtill retein it's genuine principles, yet it may appear Another.

2. It is poſſible ſuch innovations may be ſo obvious, that the People may diſcover them.

3. Thoſe

3. Those who depart from such innovators, are not schismaticks, but faithful Believers.

4. Be the Innovators never so high in Authority, we must be so far from paying them Implicit Faith, that we must not pay them ordinary Charity, but hold them Accursed

And lest Bishops might think their office called them to such studies, he cautioneth both Timothy *and* Titus *against them; as no less Foolish than Mischievous. So careful was this great Apostle to arm both Pastors and People against the Gnosticks insinuations. But with what success?*

The Serpent's voice prevaileth against all Precepts, the People run counter to the Apostle's Warnings, and the Priests to his Example: Those heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears; *and These heap up Doctrines to scratch that itch: gently at first, Gratifying their Curiosity; but afterward rudely Tormenting their Conscience: The peoples hunger in time turned to a Surfeit, and the Priests still cram'd them with Doctrines which they could not swallow or digest; so Many in numbers that an ordinary memory cannot retein them; so Perplexed in matter, that the best understanding cannot comprehend them; so Impertinent to any good purpose, that a good man need not regard them; and so Unmentioned in Scripture, that none but the greatest subtilty can therein discover the least intimations of them. No sentence, hardly any word in the New Testament escapeth the Rack, that they may be forced to confess what they never thought of: They are put to many Questions, and every Question is stretched by many Articles, and every Article vex'd with many Objections, and all this in a New Rude Language unknown to any civil nation.*

And to what purpose all this? That by the Difficulties and Dryness of such a study, free and generous minds may quit it, Monks engross it, and an Infallible Chair be established, to determin doubts, of no other use but to make work for the Oracle

THAT *we may therefore be just to our Lord's Providence and Gospel, we must take to our selves both the* Warning, *which we have found the Apostle gave to the* Corinthians; *and the* Encouragement *which he gave to the* Galatians: *The Former will* admonish *us to Retrieve the* Simplicity, *from which mens minds have been so Much and so Long corrupted: The Later will* embolden *us to Censure those (whoever they be) that have been the Seducers; and that we may not be dazeled by any reverence toward their Characters, we must remember that he mounteth them above any supposition that can reach our case.*

Had he only said in General (however Comprehensive) words, that we must not be awed by the Greatest human authority; this (however Ample and Absolute) would have appeared a Cold encouragement, in comparison of such an express naming, not only of the greatest that can be Supposed, but greater than can be Imagined.

No King is more independent in his own Dominions from any forrein jurisdiction in matters Civil, than every Christian is within his own Mind in matters of Faith: and none can be so secure of any other's Faithfulness to his Soul, as every man may be of his own: the advice therefore which the best of Kings gave to the Heir of his Crowns, doth no less concern every one that hath a Soul to save.

Above all *(said the incomparable King* Charles *I. in his Paper to the Prince)* I would have you, as I hope you are already, well grounded and settled in your Religion, the best profession whereof I have ever esteemed that of the Church of *England*, in which you have been educated: yet I would have your own Judgment and Reason now seal to that sacred bond which education hath written, that it may be judiciously your own Religion, and not other mens Customs or Tradition which you profess.

To seal to any bond which education may have written, were to profess other mens Tradition, which in the Blessed Kings judgment is an unworthy baseness: that the Prince might in this Particular worthily do it, was by consequence on the excellency of the Church wherein he had been educated; which though Happy for Him, is Accidental as to the Generality of mankind. This very advice therefore requireth another step, to examin That very Church wherein we have been educated, that we may not put our Souls into a Lottery, wherein are many Bad draughts for one Good: for so we cannot possibly be Judicious in a right choice; and it is great odds, but we shall be Unhappy in an evil Lot.

The Church of England *as it Needs not, so it Does not, forbid any of it's sons the use of their own eyes: if it did, This alone would be sufficient reason, not only to Distrust, but Condemn it.*

Our great care must be, that we act no less Sincerely than Couragiously in this great affair, which we cannot better manage than by these necessary enquiries.

1. What was That Gospel, which our Lord and his Apostles preached as necessary to be believed?

2. What Alterations or Additions have after-ages made in it?

3. What Advantage or Damage hath thereupon ensued?

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Qu. I. *What was that Gospel which our Lord and his Apostles preached as necessary for Salvation.*

Τί δὲ τὸ παιδεύειν; μανθάνειν τὰς φυσικὰς θεωλήψεις ἐφαρμόζειν τε ὅπῃ μέρος ἑκάστοις καταλλήλως τῇ φύσει. *What is Learning or Instruction, but application of Generals to Particulars in a natural way?* saith *Arrian* upon *Epictetus*; laying it as a Fundamental rule whereon we must build, and whereby we must regulate all our opinions in point of Manners. And it will as well hold in all other Arts and Sciences: *Euclid* buildeth all his Geometry upon such principles as he calleth στοιχεῖα, because by that A. B. C. he spelleth out all his demonstrations of Propositions and Solutions of Problems. And by the same rule must we proceed in the judgment we are to make of the Religion we profess: for thus only shall we gain a Test whereby we may understand what is true Gospel.

That we may be secure in our search for such a Test, we must consult no other but the sacred Oracles, which give us both Character and Account of the Gospel: by the former we understand the Nature; by the latter, the number of its Doctrines.

The *Character* whereby we are to judge of the Nature of the Gospel, is sometime that of a *Covenant*; oftner that of a *Message*.

1. Sometimes it is set forth as a COVENANT, either to secure us of the Performance on God's part; because if he should violate it, he must break not only a Promise given, but a Covenant stablished; or else in opposition to a *Former Covenant*, which it is to succeed; and under this Character we find it prophecied of *Jer.* 31. 33. which Prophecy is applied, *Heb.* 8. 8. *Behold, the days come (saith the Lord) when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah; Not according to the Covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand, to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my Covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the Covenant,* &c. and more succinctly, *ch.* 10. *v.* 17. *This is the Covenant that I will make with them, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my Laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

So the New Covenant is opposed to the Old. 1. Negatively, *not like the former*, which was no less difficult to be understood, than to be performed; and 2. Positively, the same which their own Hearts craved, and which were so legibly imprinted in the most ignorant mind, that every one without any instructer might read and understand.

It perfected the Old, as in a good *Picture*, the Last lively colours do the First dead ones; which they so deface, as to justifie: But the Law of Nature it perfecteth, as a *Building* doth its Foundation, which it so leaneth on, as to keep it firm in its place. For whatever natural Religion could speak in behalf of Vertue, the Gospel so confirmeth, as to build it higher, with nobler Precepts and richer Promises: As therefore as it is a *New Covenant*, it is also a better one, and deserveth the other and better Character. For

2. More frequently 'tis set forth as a *MESSAGE*. This the word literally importeth and under this Title we find it most pompously proclaimed by S. *John*, in his entry on his first Epistle; wherein having studiously recommended it to our confidence by its certainty, and to our appetites by its happiness, he proceedeth to publish its design to be no other than the advancement of Primitive, Natural Religion, to a higher perfection: *These things we write to you that you may have fellowship*, &c. The Patriarchs knew only the Father, but *our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son.* As therefore in the face of Jesus Christ we see more of the Father's goodness, so are we thereby obliged to higher strains of love to him and one another, which is the sum of Natural Religion.

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The same in a gayer dress we have in the next verse; *These things we write unto you that your joy may be full.* *Natural Religion* taught men to worship God with Feasts: and by this Argument principally doth *Plutarch* prove the Joys of the Religious to be greater than those of the Epicurean; because the one tasteth nothing but the Wine and Viands, but the other rejoiceth in God, then and there especially present and propitious. And by this Argument must the *Joy* of a Christian be greater than that of a Philosopher; because the one can have no other assurance of God's propitiousness, but what he can borrow from his Reason; whereas the other hath it by Revelation: For in the *new Covenant* above-recited, is a promise of mercy in forgiveness of sins; and in the Gospel this is more plainly expressed, so that our St. *John* maketh it a point of faithfulness in God to perform it: And whereas death is the wages of sin, eternal life must be the consequence of its pardon, which also in the Gospel is expressly promised; so what the Philosophers strongly wished and faintly hoped, the Christian is secure of, and thereby his *joy is full* in that part where theirs was thirsty.

Having thus endeared and published the gracious *Design* of his message, he proceedeth to deliver its joyful *Matter*: *This is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* A glorious, but a dazling Word! whereby yet we understand this plain truth, that God is most perfect, and it is the design of the Gospel to invite us to be such as he is; which also St. *Peter* verifyeth, saying, *For this purpose are given us many rich and precious Promises, that by them we should be partakers of the divine nature*: than which words none can more clearly declare that the design of the Gospel, is so to deliver us from the discipline of the Ceremonial Law, as to exalt us to the highest Perfection in the Natural, by making us *Perfect as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

And if this be the *Design*, this the *Matter* of the Gospel, then have we an Authentick General Test, whereby every Doctrine must be tried, that claimeth our entertainment as a Gospel Truth. For every wise Agent valueth the Means by their serviceableness to the end, and Particulars by their suitableness to the Generals: If to these we find any Doctrines serviceable, we must embrace them; if impertinent, we must slight them; if pernicious we must condemn them.

With this Test then in our hands, as we safely may, so we boldly shall pursue our Enquiries.

The First is, *What was the Gospel which our Saviour and his Apostles preached?*

This Enquiry plainly concerneth matter of Fact, and therefore cannot employ any Logick, Metaphysicks, or any other Scholastick Arts, cannot need subtilty of judgment, or cunning in dispute, or any other qualification of mind, but care and honesty; nor again doth it put us to tumble great or many Books, yea or so much as one System, saith no more than our Lord did to him that enquired, *what he should do to be saved?* Our Lord sent him to his Bible, *what is written in the Law? how readest thou.* We have a faithful record of whatever can pretend to be Gospel, and sufficient to answer the like question *what shall I believe to be saved?*

In its largest Edition the Gospel, truly so called, exceedeth not Two Doctrines: St. *Mark* saith, *Our Saviour came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, REPENT and BELIEVE the Gospel:* By which if it be not sufficiently plain, that the Gospel is comprised in Repentance and Faith, Saint *Paul* putteth it beyond dispute: For in his farewel discourse with the Elders of the Church of *Ephesus* he thus justifieth himself, *I have not kept back any thing from you that was profitable for you, but preached unto you REPENTANCE toward God, and FAITH toward our Lord Jesus*

Jesus Christ. No words can more expresly declare that in these two are contained, not only all things *Necessary*, but all things *Profitable*: And those who so importunately call for another catalogue of fundamentals, must impeach the Apostle either of gross Ignorance or a grosser Lye.

Yea, the Holy Ghost seemeth so to shun multiplication of necessaries, that in other places it thinketh Two too many, and therefore reduceth them to One; and to either of the Two. For in our Lord's first Sermon, as recited by St. *Matthew*, we find no mention of Repentance, but only of Faith: And so his last Sermon agreeth with his first, for therein he professeth this to be the design of his death and resurrection, *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.*

Yet is Faith also in its turn honoured with the same dignity, as the sole and adequate substance of the Gospel: Our Lord himself told *Nicodemus*, that *God sent him into the world, that whatsoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* And St. *John* closeth his Gospel with this saying, *These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name.*

So far is our Lord from thinking his Gospel honoured by multiplication of Articles, that rather than keep up that least of numbers, he is content to dismiss either of the two.

That in this he may not appear to contradict himself, we must consider, that they are both the same under different aspects, and in their comprehensive latitude either containeth the other: For to Believe includeth Repentance, as a condition of obtaining that Remission, which without Faith it could not pretend to, nor labour for: And Repentance includeth Faith, because it is performed in confidence of the promise, that God for Christ's sake will pardon the penitent.

Because therefore they have their several aspects and definitions, upon the distinct views whereof, they may be both of them more clearly apprehended, therefore will we handle them as the two Tables of the new Covenant, so joined as to be several. When display'd they appear Two, Faith, and Repentance; when closed, they appear but One; and That side which is next the eye denominateth the whole, sometime Faith, sometime Repentance. Yes! the whole new Covenant is written by our Lord's own finger in these two Tables; and the positive Rites which he appointed, thereby to engage us to profess our selves his Disciples, are not Parts of his Covenant, but Badges of his Followers, and Acknowledgments of their homage to his Person. Those Rituals we shall not neglect, but first must do justice to the Covenant in its Substance; and we shall endeavour to do it with all possible simplicity, with such plainness as may Instruct every Honest Reader, and Convince every Obstinate: Provided they have not so utterly abandoned all their faculties, as to become contradictions to themselves, which they must be, if they want both Courage and Fear; Courage to denounce the Anathema which the Apostle hath commissionated them to cast against the greatest human authority, if it *bring another Gospel*; and Fear to offend against our Lord's command, not to *call any one Master upon earth.*

CHAP. II.

Of FAITH, *In what ſence it juſtifieth?*

WE begin with Faith upon two contrary accounts: 1. Becauſe it is ſo unhappy, as to be the occaſion of the Gnoſticiſm which ſo much troubled S. *Paul*, by *corrupting* diſciples *minds from the ſimplicity which is in Chriſt*; and 2. Becauſe it is ſo happy, as to be honoured by our Lord and his Apoſtles, as the ſole condition for our Salvation. For as St. *Paul* declareth, that we are *juſtified by Faith without works*; ſo our Lord (who doubtleſs knew his own errand) telleth *Nicodemus*, *God ſo loved the world that he ſent his only begotten Son into it, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh but have everlaſting life.*

What can be fuller or clearer? The Benefit is proclaimed under a double character, to double its certainty, Negative, *ſhall not periſh*; and Poſitive, *ſhall have everlaſting life*: The Promiſe is Univerſal, to *whoſoever believeth*, and Free from all other condition but believing. If this ſeem incredible, the wonder is cured by another no leſs incredible, *God ſent his only begotten Son into the world* on purpoſe; yet both the one and the other are made credible by the wonderful reaſon aſſigned, *God ſo loved the world.* And now, what need of the impertinent trouble of Repentance? Why ſhould we run the ſmarting gandelope of Mortification, croſſing our Appetites, and afflicting our Souls?

Thus doſome daſh the two Tables of the new Covenant againſt each other, and make the Goſpel an enemy to its own great deſign, which we have found to be the advancement of Natural Religion.

The firſt ſervice therefore that we can reaſonably do to Faith, muſt be to reſcue it from ſo great a miſchief, by reconciling our Lord's abſolute Promiſe of *eternal life to whoſoever believeth*, with his no leſs abſolute Threat, that *except we repent we ſhall all periſh.* And this will eaſily be done by theſe two Propoſitions.

1. *All Promiſes, however abſolute in words, muſt be underſtood with implication of all things neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.*

2. *In our Lord's abſolute Promiſe of eternal life to all Believers, repentance is neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.*

1. *All Promiſes include a tacit ſuppoſal of all things neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.* It is impoſſible, at leaſt very Troubleſome, and equally Needleſs, that whoever maketh a promiſe ſhould explicitly reckon up all ſuch conditions, as by their own light are viſible, and therefore Need not; and by their Multitude Innumerable, and therefore cannot be particularly expreſſed: Reaſon therefore, and Neceſſity, and the joynt Practice of all mankind, have concurred in the rule, that whatever is neceſſary in its own nature to be Suppoſed, is to be taken as neceſſarily Implied; and accordingly in every Promiſe are tacitly implied ſuch Plain, though unmentioned Reſervations.

2. *Repentance and Holineſs of life are neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.* This appeareth both from the nature of the thing, and the expreſs declarations of the Author of the Promiſe.

From *the Nature of the thing.* The Law of Nature is written in the heart by the hand of God, as a tranſcript of his own nature, and muſt be, like its Original, immortal: The Goſpel came not to deface it, but to make it more legible; to new write it upon our Underſtandings, with clearer gloſſes; upon our Reaſon, with brighter arguments; upon our Affections, with nobler motives; upon our Hopes,

Hopes, with higher encouragements; and upon our Beliefs, with plainer Promiſes. And ſhould our Lord, upon any account whatſoever, promiſe impunity to ſin; this would turn him from a *Saviour* to a *Tempter*: *You ſhall not die*, was the voice of the Serpent; and while the Sons of *Eve* have the ſame licoriſhneſs after forbidden pleaſures, the ſame promiſe (if believed) muſt have the ſame ſucceſs. To promiſe impunity in a pleaſant evil, is to invite to its enjoyment. Far be this from our Lord, who was ſo careful to preſerve us from ſo great a danger, that he did not leave us to the general nature of all Promiſes, but clearly and frequently warned us againſt ſuch a miſtake. He openly declared, that ſome would not only plead their Faith, but its Fruits; *Preaching in his name*, *caſting out Devils*, and *doing many wonderful works*, are plain evidences of true faith; yet even to ſuch, he will ſay, *depart from me*, *I know you not*, when he knows them too well, to own them, becauſe *workers of iniquity*.

And that Repentance may not complain as leſs honoured, he preferreth it to the ſame dignity: for in his laſt Sermon to his Apoſtles, he ſaith no leſs for it than he had done for Faith, *Thus it is written, and thus it behoveth Chriſt to ſuffer and to riſe again*, and that *Repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name*; but to what purpoſe ſhould repentance be preached in his name, who had promiſed everlaſting life without it?

That we may be the more ſecure of a rule ſo important, let us ſee how it's confirmed by an example ſo oppoſite, that it looketh more like an illuſtration framed on purpoſe, than a true hiſtory, *Act.* 27. 18.

We were in the ſame danger of Eternal death, as St. *Paul* and his company were of Temporal, and our deliverance is no leſs like, than was the danger: *Paul* promiſeth, *there ſhall not be loſs of any man's life*; yet when the Mariners would have ſtolen away, he ſaid to the Centurion, *except theſe abide in the Ship we cannot be ſaved.*

What now can the *Antinomian* plead, which this example doth not anſwer? What difficulty is there in the doctrine of Juſtification by Faith, which it doth not clear? Did Chriſt abſolutely and univerſally promiſe, that *whoſoever believeth in him ſhall not periſh?* So did his Apoſtle abſolutely and univerſally promiſe, that *no man's life ſhould be loſt*: Is Juſtification freely promiſed for *Chriſt's ſake?* ſo was deliverance freely promiſed for *Paul's ſake.* Did God ſend his *Son* to publiſh this promiſe? ſo did he ſend his Angel to St. *Paul*: Are our beſt works inſufficient to juſtify us? ſo was the beſt skill of the Mariners to deliver the Voyagers. Yet unleſs the Mariners abide in the Ship, none of the Company can eſcape; and unleſs Holineſs abide in our lives, we muſt periſh. If therefore any under pretence of caſting anchor upon Chriſt's promiſe, ſteal away from repentance, we muſt have recourſe to our *rule*, as St. *Paul* had to the *Centurion*; and the neceſſity of Holineſs will perform the ſame office as the Souldiers did, cut aſunder their pretences, and let their hopes fall off.

In this rule there is nothing doubtful but this, whether it be more Obvious, or Neglected, or Important?

So *Important*, that it will clear all the difficulties which ſwell ſo many Volumes with queſtions concerning *Juſtification*, and the *Covenant of Grace.* Papiſts will not be able to quarrel with us, when we ſay with St. *Paul*, *By Faith we are juſtified*; nor will the *Antinomians* be able to accuſe us as enemies of *free Grace*, when we ſay with St. *James*, *we are juſtified by works.*

It is ſo *Obvious* and ſimple, that it will eaſily avoid the impertinent niceties of Diſputers, whether it be an Aſſent, or Reliance, or Recumbency? whether it juſtifie as an Inſtrument, or a Condition? by the Act, or the Habit? Before Sanctification,

or after it? *&c.* We no sooner reconcile St. *Paul* with himself, his Absolute Promise of deliverance with his Protestation, that without the Mariners stay they must perish; but we thence learn how to reconcile him with St. *James*; free Grace, with Conditions required; the Insufficiency of good Works, with their Necessity; Justification by Works, upon account of Natural Religion; with Justification by Faith, upon account of the Gospel.

Yet it is so *Neglected*, that among those many Treatises that have been published, concerning the *New Covenant* and *Justification*, I know not of one that hath honoured it with so much as a mention.

Yea, it is worthy our consideration upon another account; it may silence, not only the *Antinomian*, in his opposition to good Works, but the *Gnostick* too, in his humour of disputing. For pray consider; would it not have been wonderous wisely done, if in time of such danger, and upon such warning, the Souldiers, instead of hasting to secure the Mariners, and their own lives, should have trifled away their precious time in disputing to which of the two they must owe their lives? to the Apostle, because God had given them to him; or to the Mariners, because he had declared they could not escape without them? For God's sake, let us hasten to put our Souls out of danger; when that is done, and we are safe at land, if we can there find no better employment, nor greater pleasure, than to play at cross purposes, we may think how to oppose, and then to reconcile St. *Paul* and St. *James*.

The case (you may say) is very unlike: St. *Paul* was a chosen vessel, and a stout Champion for the Gospel; He was *not behind the very chiefest of the Apostles, but laboured* and suffered *more than they all.* This very voyage was but part of a danger, which carried him to a greater for the Gospel's sake: And it was but just that his Lord, for whose sake he was engaged in the storm should deliver him from it; and the extent of the favour to all his companions, though in Justice it were not due, might very congruously be granted in Kindness to so great a Saint, and under such circumstances. *But what are the great merits of faith which may any way entitle it to so great a reward as everlasting life? Whatever can pretend to worth, must make its claim good, by shewing how it partaketh the nature of God, who is the first good: but to be* Credulous, *is so far from the power of Divine life, that it is a plain confession of Weakness; it is nothing else but Leaning upon another, for want of knowledge of its own*: The simple believeth every word, but a wise man looketh well to his going, *said the wisest of all mere men. And experience telleth us, that Children and Dotards, Women and Fools, the Sick and the Ignorant, are most easie; and by how much any man is wiser, by so much he is warier, that he be not imposed upon. Had it any worth, we should have heard of it in* Moses *or the Prophets; and the Philosophers would have allowed it a place among the Virtues: Whereas on the contrary, Philosophers reckon Credulity among the Vices, and the Old Testament mentioneth it but once or twice, and that not by way of Precept, but occasionly. And what reward can it possibly deserve? If I believe, either I do it upon good reason, or not; If I see good reason for my belief, I cannot deserve Reward, because no man can chuse, but must Necessarily believe, as far as Reason requires: If I believe without reason, then I am a Fool, and so far from deserving a Reward, that I deserve Blame. And if it seem hard to justifie our Lord's Wisdom, in promising so great a Reward to a performance that deserveth none at all; it will appear no less so, to justifie his Goodness, in imposing such a task no less Difficult than Worthless: For whereas no small part of the good tidings of the Gospel, is our manumission from the bondage of* Moses's *Law; the yoke of Christ will seem the harder of the*

two.

two. It is easier for a rich man to sacrifice whole Hecatombs, when he hath wealth enough to purchase them, than to pull out his eyes, yet can any man easier pull out the eye of his Body than his Reason, which is not only the eye, but the heart; for it is his very Definition, without which he cannot be a Man: It is God's Image, *and the Apostle exhorteth us to* put on the new Man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. *Now that God should Print his image in our hearts, require us to Renew it; yet promise eternal life for reward if we Deface it, is a saying harder to be Believed, than all the Ceremonies of* Moses's *Law were to be Practised.*

This and more is objected against Faith in general; and still the more we descend to particulars, whether in the Doctrines, that are imposed as Articles of Faith; or in the dispute between That and Good works; the more will the Objections rise in force and number. For every one employeth his care against the Adversary of his opinion, with neglect of the first principles of the Gospel; and those who plead for justification by Faith, have not the gratitude to justifie Faith it self or its great Author; but leave him as an Arbitrary, Unreasonable Lawgiver, imposeing Useless, Worthless commands, with the weightiest obligations.

We shall therefore endeavour by his grace to perform so Necessary and Neglected a work; and by the Plainest, Simplest, General principles of Religion and Reason, so to assert the honour of our Lord and his Gospel, as to give a fair account both of his Wisdom and Goodness; proving his Gospel to be no less Grateful to our Reason, than gracious to our Salvation; which also will be a good healer of our breaches that are made in our minds by Doubts, or in the Church of Christ by Disputes, concerning controverted Doctrines.

For whereas it is acknowledged as a foundation in all Sciences, that we must seek truth by application of Generals to Particulars; and it is the General scope of the Gospel to advance *Natural Religion*; this is the sting of the Objection, That Faith hath no place among Virtues, but Credulity hath one among Vices: That our defence therefore may both obviate the objection, and build upon a good foundation, it shall stand upon these two pillars.

1. *Faith is a duty in Natural Religion, as a cardinal virtue.*

2. *Credulity is not Faith; but as opposite to it, as vice is to virtue.*

Both these Propositions are of Divine Authority, recommended by the Apostle, *Rom.* 3.4. in these words, *Let God be true, but every man a lyar*; so that we can say nothing but by way of explication, displaying what is wrapt up in those few divine syllables: And when we have thence discovered what figure Faith made in Natural Religion, we shall have gone at least half way in discovering what power is given it in the Gospel.

CHAP. III.

What figure FAITH made in Natural Religion.

FAITH *is a duty in Natural Religion,* a Cardinal virtue, Justice toward God, to whom it payeth what is due: To his Veracity, let God be true; to his Faithfulness, let God be just; to his Power, let God be able to perform his Promises, *&c.* That this was tanght by Natural Religion before *Moses* brought the Positive into the World, and that the Gospel buildeth upon That foundation; if any one doubt, let him but read the 4*th* chapter of S. *Paul*'s Epistle to the *Romans*, he will there find *Abraham*'s

Abraham's Faith recommended to us for a Pattern, with an Explanation of the bleſſing he obtained by it, and who are to be heirs to it: Not the Children of his *loins*, but of his *faith*, muſt be heirs; thoſe who *walk in his ſteps*, ſhall reſt in his Boſom; and after a deſcription of his heroical faith, the Panegyrick is cloſed with a declaration, *Theſe things are written, not for Abraham's ſake alone, but for ours alſo.*

That we may walk in his ſteps, it will be requiſite we trace them; which if we do, we ſhall find large ſteps on either ſide; Great Confidence in God's Faithfulneſs on one ſide, and great Obedience to his Commands on the other; by the one he ſacrificed his Reaſon, by the other his *Iſaac*.

1. *His Confidence* in God's faithfulneſs was ſo firm, that he *ſtaggered not*, but ſtood *ſtrong* in his Belief, and proceeded in his Obedience, notwithſtanding all oppoſite diſcouragements from the laws of Nature, or dictates of Reaſon. It was againſt the courſe of Nature, that he ſhould have a child, when both his own and his *Sara*'s bodies were no better than dead, as to power of generation; and more againſt the dictates of Reaſon, that *Iſaac* ſhould be a father after he were ſacrificed: yet did not either the One or the Other ſeem ſo impoſſible, as that God ſhould lye.

He knew him infinite in Wiſdom, Power, and Truth; that he could ſome way or other, undiſcovered to human eyes, perform his promiſes; and ſince no other appeared, the author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* ſuppoſeth he believed, that *God was able to raiſe him from the dead.* And in theſe ſteps of our father *Abraham*, the Apoſtle exhorteth us to walk after him; but we muſt do it — *non paſſibus æquis.* For raiſing of the dead was a thing unheard of to *Abraham*; whereas the ſame Son of God, in whom we are to believe, gave us an experiment of it in his own reſurrection; ſo that to *Abraham*'s faith and ours may be applied our Lord's words to *Thomas*, we believe after we had ſeen; but bleſſed *Abraham* had neither ſeen, nor heard, yet believed. Yet if we have the faith but of *Thomas*, it ſhall be imputed to us for righteouſneſs; and the Apoſtle ſo ſpeaketh, as if our Lord ſhewed us his Reſurrection upon That very account: for he ſaith, *Chriſt was delivered for our offences, and raiſed again for our juſtification*; in which words though the ſame particle διὰ be alike uſed in both, yet muſt it be as little the Apoſtles Meaning as our Intereſt, that it ſhould import the ſame in both; for he ſo *dyed for our offences*, as to dye in our ſtead; but we cannot deſire, nor could the Apoſtle mean, that he roſe in our ſtead: We rejoice that our offences are taken away by his Death, but ſhould be ſorry to have our Juſtification taken away by his Reſurrection: It is therefore plain that the Particle [*For*] is ſo far from the ſame ſignification in both, that the former is contrary to the later: We are juſtified by his Blood, becauſe thereby our ſins are blotted out; but we are juſtifyed by his Reſurrection, becauſe thereon our Faith is built: for thereby we are convinced of the truth which we are to believe, and by that belief to be juſtifyed, as was *Abraham*. So plain it is that the Faith which the Goſpel requireth had its foundation in natural Religion; and while *Abraham* is propoſed as the *father of the Faithful*, Natural Faith is alſo propoſed as the mother of the Evangelical. That in the Law it ſhould never be Commanded, nor ſo much as recommended more than once, and that with no higher Eulogy than this, *Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteouſneſs*; nor by any of the Prophets, but once, and that with this ſhort come-off, *the juſt ſhall live by his Faith*; this is no wonder at all: For whoever hath ſo much Religion as to believe there is a God, muſt believe him to be Abſolutely perfect; which he could not be, if he want either Veracity or Power; and

if

if he be infinite in Both, it must be impossible for him to lye, or fail of performing his Promises.

This therefore needeth neither Revelation for want of Evidence, nor Precept for want of a plain Obligation: and the Old Testament must have done impertinently, if without any need it should have offered the one or the other.

Yet though the Old Testament gives us no command, it doth give us Warnings by the punishment of Unbelievers. *Sarah*, for her believing husbands sake, escaped with a gentle reprimand, though her Unbelief of the truth of God's messenger were aggravated with a double Untruth of her own: for though she laughed at the promise of a Son in her old age, and then denied that she did so laugh; yet did the Angel reprove her with no other sharpness, but that of reason, against her double fault. *Is any thing impossible with God?* was an argument drawn from Natural Religion, so forceable as to triumph over all natural causes, and stop the mouth of all other infidelity, but that of the Atheist.

But *Lot*'s wife, after so manifest experience of the Power of her guests, in delivering themselves from the force of the whole City, by smiting small and great with blindness, believed not their threats to destroy the same City with fire; but turning *back from behind* her believing, flying husband (who's haste to save himself, and obedience to the prohibition of the Angels (*saying look not behind thee*) hindered him from perceiving it) returning into the cursed City, there perished among her wicked neighbours, and became a *piller of salt*, that is, in the Hebrew idiom, *an everlasting Monument*, of the punishment due to Unbelievers.

When to a starving City the Prophet of God promised a greater plenty the next day, than ever had been known in any; the incredulous Lord had This punishment, that he *saw it with his eyes* for the conviction of his Unbelief, but could not taste it for the satisfaction of his Hunger: The unbelieving Israelites, who lived upon daily experience of God's power, when they distrusted his promise of victory over the tall and mighty *Canaanites*, perished in the Wilderness; and those that asked, *can God prepare a table in the wilderness?* fell under his wrath with the meat in their mouths.

The same light which sheweth us the Being of God, sheweth also his Perfections; and to give an express Law, or use any other means to perswade a Belief in him, had been the same wisdom, as to perswade me to believe the Sun shineth; which were an affront both to the Sun and me.

And thus I hope I have proved that Faith in God is a duty of Natural Religion, a moral Virtue, and to be valued for its intrinsick worth, as a *participation of the Divine Nature*, in one of God's Attributes, his Justice; and we may well proceed to consider, that besides this intrinsick worth, whereby it deserveth to be valued as self-good; it hath another worth, as a Serviceable means to all other Graces and Duties.

2. *FAITH* is a great promoter of Obedience; and where as the Old Testament seemeth silent herein, we have a whole and large Chapter in the New, ascribing all the heroical actions and suffering of the Patriarchs to This Grace; and so by a kind and postliminium asserting the right which Natural Religion had, and God might (if he had pleased) have by Law required.

And that it may be proved as clearly as asserted; an argument is offered in the entrance upon the discourse: *by Faith* Enoch *was translated, having received this testimony, that he pleased God; but without Faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*; which argument will receive a little light from the phrase wherein the testimony

ſtimony was given, and where to the Argument refers. It is ſaid *Gen.* 5. 22. *Enoch walked with God*, and now the Sorites runs thus, He that doth not walk with God cannot pleaſe God, he that doth not come to God cannot walk with God, he that doth not believe that God is, and is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him, cannot come to him, nor will he ſeek after him.

After this Argument we have a muſter of many atchievements performed by Faith in the Patriarchs and others, among whom ſtandeth Father *Abraham* like *Saul* among the people, taller by the head; not only than all there preſent, but than all that ever were or ſhall be: For the higheſt Boaſt of St. *John* is, *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith:* but *Abraham* might boaſt a Victory, not only over the *world*, but over its *Creator*. For it is ſaid *God tryed Abraham*: he did indeed, for he tryed the maſtery with him: he *tryed* which could exceed, himſelf in hard Commands, or *Abraham* in abſolute Obedience; and upon tryal it appears, that the victory fell to *Abraham*'s Faith, which did not only *Fulfil* his duty, but *Exceed it*; perhaps in the Matter, certainly in the manner. The *Matter* was ſuch, as he might have Diſputed, and perhaps Diſobeyed, without ſin: He might poſſibly have pleaded God's *Promiſe* in bar to his *Command*. God had given him this Son, 'tis true, but with a promiſe annexed, that this Son, this very Son *Iſaac*, ſhould be Father of a numerous and bleſſed Poſterity: And ſince this depended upon his life; whatever Right God might have to his Obedience, himſelf had a Right in God's Promiſe, which he could not be obliged to renounce. And granting that God's Prerogative might over-rule ſuch a Plea; This however, cannot be denied, that Obedience, however unwilling, was the utmoſt which the Command could exact, and therefore

2. The *Manner* of his Obedience certainly exceeded his Obligation, in the Chearfulneſs and Diligence of the performance. For though *Iſaac* were endeared to him by long deſpair, and then by glorions promiſes; though he muſt periſh not by an Ordinary or Honourable death, but that, of a Beaſt; though the tender Father muſt not Hear of this by Meſſengers, but muſt Torment his Eyes, yea Imbrue his Hands too in the cruel Butchery; though in ſo doing, he muſt offer no leſs violence to his Reaſon, than to his *Iſaac*; though all this might well have Staggered, yea quite Overthrown both Faith and Obedience; yet he is ſo far from Staggering, that he doth not only Stand firm to his Duty, but Out-goeth it: doth not plead the ſcandal of ſo Cruel, ſo Inhumane, and Unnatural an action, as muſt make his Perſon and his Religion ſtink among his Neighbours; doth not intercede for his only Son as for *Sodom*, ſaying, *Shall not the God of all the world do right?* Doth not petition for him as *Moſes* did for the people, that God would reverſe his Sentence, or as *Jephta*'s Daughter did for a little time of reprieve; but without the leaſt tergiverſation, is equally Diligent and Cautious in the execution; riſeth early in the morning, hideth his purpoſe from his Wife, leſt ſhe ſhould hinder it, taketh with him but two Servants, and them he leaveth at ſuch diſtance, as to prevent the reſcue which their officiouſneſs might make of their young Maſter from the ſeeming madneſs of their old, drilleth *Iſaac* himſelf along with pretence that God would provide a Lamb: what could the moſt Tender father do more to Save the life of an only Son? *Hæc eſt fides*, ſaid *Nero*, when his Servant to ſatisfie his humour killed himſelf; this is ſuch a Faith as might well be *imputed to Abraham for righteouſneſs*, and propoſed to us for a pattern; and ſtop the mouth of all objections which ſhall not think Faith worthy of God's acceptance, or of a place among Moral Virtues which are the Graces in Natural Religion.

And

And as it hath the Worth, ſo it hath the Unhappineſs of a Virtue, beſet on either ſide with a Vice, Defect on one ſide, and Exceſs on the other: on the One ſide Infidelity is the Defect, and on the Other ſide Credulity is the Exceſs of Faith; and as i uſual with all Virtues, we find it reproach ed under the name of the Exceſs, whereo it is no wiſe guilty, as we come to conſide in our ſecond Propoſition.

CHAP. IV.

Credulity is not FAITH, but an oppoſite Vice.

II. CREDULITY is not Faith, but as oppoſite to it as Vice is to Virtue: as Fool-hardineſs is to Valour, Prodigality to Bounty, and all Exceſs to Prudence, which is the Soul of all Virtue whatever.

We have reduced Faith to Juſtice; becauſe its proper work is to pay God the confidence due to his Veracity. And herein we ſeem to be out of all danger of Exceſs, ſeeeing God's faithfulneſs is infinite: and ſo indeed we are, while we make our payment to the Right Object. For to God is due not only Actual belief of every word which we know him to have ſpoken, but an Habitual readineſs to believe any other, when ever it ſhall appear to come from him, and all without reſerve for any contradicting ſence or reaſon.

Our only danger of exceſs therefore lieth in our miſtake, not of the Degree but the Object; and this we incur if we pay That confidence to any creature which is due to God only.

Our excellent *Chillingworth* ſpake no leſs Modeſtly than Rationally, when he ſaid, that he had often demanded of the Romaniſts, why *implicit Faith in our Lord*, might not as well avail for Juſtification, as *implicit Faith in the Church*; but could never receive an anſwer to ſo plain and important a queſtion: It is indeed too much to be Anſwered, but too little to be Demanded; for it ought to be raiſed to a demand, how any Church dare Challenge, or any Perſon dare Pay, that faith t Any, yea to all the creatures in heaven an earth, which is due to God only? This Injuſtice to God, for two plain Reaſons.

1. It is a kind of ſpiritual Polytheiſm ſuch a falling down and worſhipping th creature, as muſt provoke Him who de clareth himſelf a *jealous God*, that will nc give his honour to another: *Let God l true, and every man a liar*, is a double wor of God's own mouth; and he that doth no believe the Latter as well as the Former maketh God a Liar, and man a God.

2. Thoſe who ſo require implicit fait in any other authority, as to contradic Reaſon; give God the lie, by making hi contradict himſelf. For Reaſon is no le the word of God, than is the Scripture Yea Therefore, and therefore only, ar we to believe whatever we find in Scripture becauſe we are by plain Reaſon convince that it is the word of God, whom w muſt believe in defiance to all oppoſitio whatſoever. *The ſpirit of a man is the candl of the Lord, ſearching the innermoſt parts o the belly*, ſaith *Solomon*. The ſpirit is tha part of our frame, wherein *we are create in knowledge after the image of God*: and i the *fleſhly tables of our hearts* are his word written with the ſame finger, as were hi laws in the *tables of Stone*; and therefore t ſay that this *Candle* contradicted the *Sun o righteouſneſs*, is no leſs injurious to God than to his image and workmanſhip.

There is indeed in the One as in the O

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her light, great difference of degrees of brightneſs: Some truths appear ſo plain, that the Weakeſt, yea the Soreſt eye cannot avoid ſeeing and acknowledging them; but ſome are ſo ſmall or ſo remote, that they may deceive or eſcape the Beſt. Yet muſt not This prejudice our belief of ſuch great truths, as appear plain both by ſunshine and candlelight, whereof the later never contradicteth the former.

Abraham's faith is our conſtantly ſerviceable pattern: It ſeemed utterly repugnant to plain reaſon, that *Iſaac* ſhould be a father of nations if he were ſacrificed; but it ſeemed much more ſo, that God ſhould be Unfaithful; and therefore, when *Abraham* believed, he did no leſs juſtice to his own Reaſon, than to God's Faithfulneſs.

To make this (if poſſible) yet plainer, we muſt diſtinguiſh between matter of Faith, and matter of Fact: Matter of Faith, is this only Propoſition, that it is impoſſible God ſhould lie; and to This, *Abraham* ſtood firm, without ſtaggaring at the ſeeming oppoſition between the Promiſe and the Command: But that God firſt made ſuch a Promiſe, and then impoſed ſuch a Command, this was matter of Fact; wherein though the Scripture be ſilent, Reaſon is clamarous; ſhewing us, that *Abraham* was by Sufficient (though to us Unrevealed) evidences, no leſs Secure This way, than Confident the Other way. Elſe might he more juſtly be Blamed for diſhonouring God with a thought, that he could be author of ſuch a cruel command; than juſtified for his confidence in a faithfulneſs, which had been unconcerned.

So there muſt be two Meaſures for our belief: of the one kind is the faithfulneſs of the Perſon, in whom we believe: if God be the perſon, our Belief muſt be Infinite, becauſe his Veracity is ſo; if Man be the perſon, our Belief muſt be Wary, becauſe Man is a Liar, or at leaſt may be ſuſpected to be ſo. Of the other kind, is the evidence which we have, that what is offered us for the word of God, is really ſuch: and to this we muſt pay neither More nor Leſs belief, than Reaſon will prove due; provided we be ſtill ready to pay more, as our evidence ſhall increaſe, becauſe our Reaſon for belief will increaſe equally with ſuch evidence. This is all that Juſtice can demand; and whoever payeth more, doth it in his Own wrong, and perhaps in God's too.

A ſad example hereof we have in the Prophet, that by the word of the Lord came from *Juda* to *Bethel*, and to the King's face propheſied the deſtruction of his Altar: he obeyed a Troubleſom and Hazardous Command, refuſed a Royal Invitation, returned homeward another way than that by which he came, and in every thing conformed to his Commiſſion. But when an old Prophet ſaid to him, *I am a Prophet as well as thou art, and an Angel ſpake unto me by the word of the Lord, ſaying, Bring him back with thee into thine houſe, that he may eat bread, and drink water*; the eaſie good man, believing the malicious lying one, was puniſhed, not ſo properly for his Diſobedience, as his Credulity. This being the rule (ſay the Rabbins and Reaſon) that when a Prophet hath received a word immediately from God, he muſt not believe any other than an equally immediate word of God in contradiction to it.

The example jointeth cloſe with the caſe before us. Whatever we hear from clear Reaſon, we hear from a word of God: whoever would perſwade us to disbelieve it, muſt produce ſuch Credentials, as may convince us to the contrary; If he do this, Reaſon immediately tacketh about in conformity to the Evidence, as to another word of the ſame God: but if no other Credentials be offered than his own, or ſome other Humane (that is, Fallible or Fallacious) authority; we are no more to comply with it, than the true Prophet ought to have done with the lying one.

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The end perhaps of such Credulous persons may be less dismal, they may not become the *Lions* prey; but they have already made themselves the *Asses* companions, by submitting their Understandings to the Bridle and Saddle, imposed on them by a dull mistake of Credulity toward man for Faith toward God; more obvious than that of the Fool-hardy Prodigal, or any other overdoer, that by Excess vitiateth a Virtue.

By these Plain and Vulgar Principles of Morality, we understand in Believing as we do in all other actions, what is Virtuous or Vicious, and so do we also, why so Little hath been spoken of it by *Moses* and the Prophets, and so Much by Christ and his Apostles. The same Natural Religion which claimed it as due to God, forbad to pay it to any Creature; upon the Former account there was No need of an expres precept, and upon the Latter there was the Greatest need; not only of an express Command, but such repeated Importunities, as might outvoice both Reason, when it should decry such a demand and Interest, when it should rebel against convinced Reason; both whereof concurred against the belief which our Lord required.

CHAP. V.

Why FAITH *maketh a greater figure under the Gospel, than it did under the Law?*

FOR our clearer view of the Reason why Faith should make so much a greater figure in the Gospel, than it did under the Law, let us parrallel *Faith* toward Christ, with *Loyalty* towards the King. *Loyalty* is a standing duty, which at all times must be paid to the King. In peaceable times, as there is no occasion for any proclamation to require it, so there is none to Promise it any Reward, but what the laws of Government promise at all times to good Subjects, protection in their just rights: But if a Prince be dethroned and banished, disabled to defend his own power and his subjects lives; if Loyalty now shall expose a good Subject to as great punishments, as in good times are the reward of rebellion; In this case, Policy for his own interests, concurreth with Justice to a good subjects merits, to perswade the Prince, by publick proclamations and private messages, and all other possible means, to encourage his Subjects with liberal promises, that they may find it their Interest as well as their Duty, to imploy their endeavours in their injured Prince's behalf.

Just thus it is in the present case: Faith is a standing duty to Christ, and must be paid at all times to the end of the World. But at that time when our Lord first claimed it, and St. *Paul* spoke such great things of it, there were extraordinary reasons for the importunities and promises, wherewith it was then honoured, and the world solicited; some whereof in these days, when the Christian Religion hath been long established, have lost their influence.

Those extraordinary reasons may be reduced to three. 1. The *Difficulties* of believing. 2. The *Danger* of professing it. 3. The *Necessity* of both.

1. The *Difficulties* at first were many and great; the Command was short, but Hard: *You believe in God, believe also in me. You believe in God*, you cannot avoid so doing, and the very notion of a God exacts it from you: You cannot believe there is a God without believing him to be infinite,

s in all other perfections, ſo in Faithfulneſs; and this will require on your part uitable, *i. e.* Infinite Confidence. The ame Infinite, Abſolute, Implicit belief, vhich you thus acknowledge due to God, s alſo due to Me; I am come from heaven to e the light of this lower world in Spiritual things, as the Sun is in Corporal; and vhatever I ſpeak, I require you to believe vith the ſame confidence, as you would a particular word from heaven, or a maniſeſt object of ſight enlightened by the Sun.

This *at That time* (ſtill I ſay *at That time*) when our Lord put in ſuch a claim, and his Apoſtles pleaded for it, appeared very Hard, becauſe very Unreaſonable command, both to Jews and Greeks; it was *to the Jews a ſtumbling block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs; for the Jews required a Sign, and the Greeks ſought after Wiſdom*, and he that would believe, muſt run counter to the whole world: for ſo did the Jews object to St. *Paul, We know that this ſect is every where ſpoken againſt.*

1. *The Greeks ſought after Wiſdom*, and to them ſuch a belief ſeemed Fooliſhneſs. Their Wiſdom, was Prudence; their Religion, Virtue: The ſame Religion which taught to pay God infinite belief, taught them alſo to meaſure their belief toward Man by the credibility of the Speaker, or the Word by him ſpoken; and whatever exceeded this meaſure, was fooliſhneſs.

But if Religion were no leſs concerned than Reaſon, then muſt Impiety joyn with Fooliſhneſs, and as it doubled the Vice, ſo did it the Caveat: for as all change of opinion is difficult, ſo is that of Religion moſt ſo. The World was never poſſed by any Religion ſo abſurd, but that education and growth gave it ſuch roots, as would not be pluckt up with eaſe or a little labour; yea, moſt men have no other reaſon for their Religion but this, which equally prevails for the Worſt as the Beſt. The Whimſies of *Mahomet* are no leſs confidently embraced, and zealouſly defended and propagated, nor perhaps have they had fewer Martyrs or Confeſſors, than the holy Doctrines of the bleſſed Jeſus. The Worſhippers of (God's mirror) the Sun, yea of the works of mens hands in wood and ſtone, are no leſs tenacious of their Folly, than we are of the Truth: Thoſe who worſhip what they eat, believe all thoſe damned, who will not pull out their eyes and do the ſame. Since therefore none could believe in Chriſt, without renouncing the Religion whereby he was poſſeſſed; this alone made it very difficult.

And the very meanneſs of the Perſon was a mighty prejudice againſt ſo great a claim. This had no part in the trial of *Abraham*'s faith: He was no leſs ſure that he had Gods Command for ſacrificing *Iſaac*, than that he had his Promiſe for a bleſſed poſterity from his loins: but here the great difficulty, is the credibility of the Perſon commanding and promiſing ſuch great things: That he could give his followers Eternal Life, who could not ſave himſelf from the moſt Shamefull and Painful Death; that he could give the inheritance of a *Kingdom*, who had not *where to lay his head*; that the Son of a Carpenter was the Son of God; that a man of Sorrows was the Lord of Glory; theſe appeared ſuch abſurdities to their reaſon, that thoſe who ſought after *wiſdom*, muſt needs find it extreamly difficult to ſwallow them.

2. *The Jews required a ſign*, and ſuch a ſign, as might be no leſs too mighty for all thoſe which had been wrought by *Moſes*'s rod, than was his Serpent for thoſe of the *Egyptian* Magicians. The Founders of all other religions wheedled the Credulous crowd into a belief of their familiarity with ſome God: Thus did *Numa* impoſe upon his *Romans*, and *Mahomet* upon his *Arabiens*: But *Moſes* was publickly owned by God in the eyes of the whole people, who for the ſpace of forty years lived upon miracles under his conduct; they ſaw and heard the dreadful thunders and lightnings.

nings which promulgated their laws, which they therefore believed must be Immortal, because they knew them to be divine: And can they believe him to come from the same God, who prophaned the Sabbath which that law had made the cognisance of his peculiar people?

To this prejudice derived from Religion, add another from Interest. They called the law their Inheritance, and as such they valued it; they look't upon the הגוים the profane residue of Mankind, as no less Inferiour to their holy selves, than Superior to the Beasts: and that they should be levelled into an equality, how incredible it appeared, we may measure from the astonishment of the great Apostle, who speaks of it, as if he were again struck down by a light and voice from heaven. *Eph.* 3. 11. *By revelation he made known to me the mystery*, &c. and verse the 9th. *To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which he proposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.* What is This so wonderful Mystery? even this, which cannot be comprehended in one clause, that the *Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promises in Christ by the Gospel.* By such amazment of this great Apostle, we may judge of his whole Nation, and by the astonishment of him, who would not have believed upon any less evidence than a revelation, we may safely measure the difficulty which lay upon all those that were trained up in the same Religion.

Another stumbling-block lay quite cross their way, because cross to their expectations: They lookt for a Messia, that by his Victories should no less advance them in Prosperity above all other Nations, than *Moses* by his Law had advanced them in Holiness: a Messia, whose Person should be Illustrious, his Sword Victorious, his Reign Glorious, and *of whose Kingdom there should be no end*, either in point of Extent or Duration; Such a Messia did their Prophets promise, and the time appointed was now fulfilled; their expectations therefore were big, and their longings ardent: And must this triumphant Messia now dwindle into a vagabond Galilean? Must their expected Triumphs sink into this dismal Promise, *He that will be my disciple, must take up his cross and follow me!* This was therefore a great stumbling-block to the Understandings, because it lay cross to their Interests; they were the more Unable, because Unwilling, to believe it; which therefore required a weight of importunities and promises, sufficient to counterballance the double weight of reluctancies. Nor was this the worst, for

2. The *Danger* was at That time no less than the *Difficulty*. I say at *That time*, because That circumstance is highly considerable: As it was extraordinary in point of Danger to the Disciples, so did it require such extraordinary promises and importunities from our Lord, as might induce them both to combat all Difficulties, and outface all Danger.

In good and peaceable Times, when a Prince exerciseth his Power without opposition, as there is no Merit in Loyalty, so is there no Proclamation of Reward to it. But if he be driven from his Throne, and disabled not only to Govern his Subjects, but to Defend Himself: if Loyalty be treated as Rebellion, and to assert the oppressed Prince's Right be a forfeiture of Life and Estate; in such a case, the Prince's Interest concurreth with Justice, to perswade him to encourage his good Subjects with Promises Extraordinary as his Own Needs, and Their Danger.

Just thus it was in those Times when Faith made so great figure in the Gospel, that it seemed to engross the whole Duty

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of a Christian, and all the promises of Salvation. Had it been sufficient to have believed with a Convinced, yet Silent mind; whatever the Difficulty might have been, the Safety might have equalled it: But this could not be accepted; the mouth must join with the heart, *Rom.* 10. 10. *For with the Heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the Mouth confession is made unto salvation. Nicodemus* came to our Lord with the Former without the Later; for coming *by night*, and Privately owning what he was either Ashamed or Afraid Openly to profess, he is told in the Rabbinical stile, that unless by Baptism he make Open Profession of his Faith, he cannot be a Christian, *Joh.* 3. To the same sense also did our Lord tell his Apostles, when he commissioned them to preach the Gospel, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved:* not simply *he that believeth*, but *he that believeth and is baptized*; so making a Publick Profession of his Belief, and himself a Visible Member of Christ's Church.

And here those, who upon this account deny Infants to be capable of Baptism, because they are uncapable of Belief, may do well to consider the change of Times, and of the reason thereon depending. At That time, whoever did not openly profess the New and Persecuted religion, must be supposed to joyn with the rulers in that religion, which was publickly professed and stablished by the laws of the Land: but now the wind bloweth from the opposit quarter, and since the Gospel is the stablished religion, and the profession of the very parents maketh great odds against any danger of the contrary, the Church may, upon small security from other sureties, admit any infant for a member.

To which also we may add, that our Lord to his promise of *everlasting life* annexed another: *These sings shall follow them that believe, in my name they shall cast out Devils* &c. The miraculous powers which were Therefore at That time given, because at that time they were necessary toward planting the new Gospel, ceased with the need which required them, and for the same reason did the Method, of belief preceding baptism.

At present we are not considering the Method, but the Design of Baptism: it was an open Profession of Faith, and therewith an open Defiance to the World and all its Powers: The Rulers had no less malice in their hearts, than Power in their hands, against all that should profess a Faith, which must abolish the law of *Moses*, which they gloried in, as advancing them to a singular holiness above all other Nations, who yet were no less Enemies to the same new Religion, which must destroy their Idols. Our Saviour therefore dealeth plainly and faithfully, *He that will be my disciple, must take up his cross and follow me: He that hateth not Father and Mother, yea and his own life also, cannot be my disciple: I send you forth as lambs among wolves; ye shall be brought before Governours and Kings for my names sake*, &c.

Such harpships were not more contrary to the Appitites of flesh and blood, than to the Notions they had been educated in, of great Prosperity under the Messiah: They had dreamed of another kind of *Victory over the World*, than what St. *John* boasted, saying, *this is the Victory which overcometh the World, even your Faith*; your faith which overcometh the world by suffering all kind of Persecutions in this life, in assurance of glorious Rewards in another.

And in this, the Faith of the Christian outvyeth That of *Abraham* himself. There was indeed a danger that he might lose his *Isaac*, if God could not restore him to life when sacrificed; but he had an experiment of God's power to give him another Son, notwithstanding his old age if he could not restore the Same, But to the faithful disciples of Christ there was apparent,

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not Danger only, but Certainty, of loſs of their *All, Children, Parents, Lands, Liberty, yea, Life it ſelf.*

Bleſſed be the gracious Providence of God, that now and for many Ages the wind is turned to the contrary point. Our Education maketh it now as difficult, and our Laws as dangerous, to deny Chriſt, as at firſt it was to confeſs him: and conſequently whatever Extraordinary merit it might derive from thoſe topicks, muſt now be lowerd, and when it ſhall thus be reduced to its Ordinary, and permanent worth, it will appear (like Loyalty in peaceable times) a common grace, worthy of no greater than common rewards, For now its whole ſtock of merit is owing to its fruits, wherein alſo it falleth ſhort of what it bore in the times of its planting; for at that time

3. The Neceſſity of Faith was equal to the Difficulty and Danger: And indeed without This, the other two or either of them would have made the Command unreaſonable.

That Prince would not deſerve to be owned in the Beſt of times, much leſs to be fought for in the Worſt, that ſhould Needleſly impoſe Hard and Dangerous ſervices upon his good Subjects.

To expoſe them to hardſhips and dangers of a neceſſary War, hath alway been juſtified in the beſt Kings; and to encourage their valour with promiſe of ſuitable rewards is equally Juſt and Wiſe: But to expoſe them to fight with Beaſts, only for pleaſure of the Spectacle, was abhorred by faithful Chriſtians when practiſed by wanton heathen. Let us therefore diſtinguiſh the Times.

1. This Neceſſity of Faith had ſomething ſingular at that time when it was firſt exalted to ſuch Honour. A great, and Dangerous but Neceſſary, and otherwiſe Unaccompliſhable work muſt be performed. The Kingdom of Heaven muſt ſubdue all the reſiſting world: God's worſhip muſt be ſtript of all thoſe Ceremonies wherewith his own hand had dreſt it, and reduced to ſimple nakedneſs of ſpirit and truth; the partition wall muſt be broken down which appropriated God's holy people, *&c.* Toward ſo great a work he came furniſhed with no other power, but that of working miracles for mens conviction: and ſhould thoſe who were thereby convinced, hide their belief within their own breaſts, this might bring ſome particular Perſons, not whole Nations to ſubjection. It was therefore Neceſſary to call aloud not only for Belief, but for Profeſſion of it: and ſince ſuch a Profeſſion at ſuch a Time, muſt run ſuch a gandelope, between Difficulties and Dangers, it was but reaſonable, that the importunities of the Calls and the price of the Promiſes, ſhould joyn with the Neceſſity of the Performance to outweigh ſo great Diſcouragements.

2. Though in ſuch Extraordinary reſpects the Neceſſity be now abated, ſo that every Profeſſor need not be a Preacher or Confeſſor in the hardeſt ſence; yet there ſtill remains a Permanent neceſſity, from the influence which Faith Alway (becauſe Naturally) hath upon the believers Actions; and ſince Theſe muſt alway be Holy, That muſt alway be indiſpenſible.

Loyalty is loyalty at All times. In the worſt times it will Fight, in the beſt it will Obey: and when it hath no Occaſion, will be ready upon All occaſions to approve it ſelf faithful. And Faith is Faith at all times. When the world fighteth againſt its Lord, it will fight againſt the world in his cauſe: it hath the ſame Valour when it hath not the ſame occaſion to exerciſe it by ſuffering, as had the primitive Chriſtians; and it hath ever the faithfulneſs to fight againſt all kinds of Enemies to his kingdom, Fleſh and Blood, and ſpiritual wickedneſs, and whatever will not have the Lord rule over it.

The Chriſtian in the moſt peaceable times is a Souldier liſted under his Lord's

Banner

Banner in Baptism: he must follow (when called) the Captain of his Salvation that was made perfect by sufferings; and when tempted, he must walk in the steps of his father *Abraham*, sacrifice his Lusts, though no less dear than was his *Isaac*.

Our Lord therefore is not like some weak Princes, that upon meer unaccountable Caprice, load their good Subjects with heavy burthens, and advance worthless favourites to undeserved honors; but measureth his Laws by his Subjects Needs. What Natural Religion taught, the Gospel verifieth, Our Lord himself declared, that the reason of his coming into the world was his father's love to it, And it must be a greater mistery than any he hath required us to believe, if he should so Unkindly treat the world which he so Dearly loved, as to require them upon pain of eternal death, to believe more than is necessary for their salvation: for should he require more than is Necessary, he must do it either for some other reason, or without any reason at all. If we believe him to require faith for any Other reason, than because it is necessary for our incouragement to Holiness in order to Happiness; we dishonour him, because no other reason can be worthy of his Goodness or Majesty: If upon no other reason at all, we dishonour him; because this would contradict his Wisdom, which never acteth without good reason.

And now I hope we sufficiently discover why Faith is so much exalted in the Gospel: The reasons are partly Extraordinary and expired, partly Ordinary and permanent: The Extraordinary, derived from the circumstances wherein the Gospel was first preached: The Ordinary, from its serviceableness to the divine life which Natural Religion aimed at, but the Gospel by means of believing, exalteth with nobler arguments, as will more clearly appear, if we examine the Subject matter which Faith is to believe.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Of Faith in CHRIST, *as Saviour of the World.*

THAT the great things that are ſpoken of Faith, oblige us to enquire what is neceſſary for us to believe, is too clear to need Proof: yet is there nothing leſs heeded or underſtood, even by the Inquiſitive: and ſo, That Grace whoſe great Worth is derived from its Serviceableneſs to our Happineſs, by diſturbing our Peace Private and Publick, is made it's greateſt Enemy.

Our preſent Work calleth for Enquiries, not Complaints: and therefore adjourning theſe to a more proper time, we ſhall purſue the Enquiry now before us: viz. *What are thoſe ſaving Truths, to the Belief whereof, eternal Life is promiſed?*

And here our former Remarks meet us again. Our Lord avoideth Multiplying Articles of Faith, no leſs than Commands: Thoſe were but Two at moſt, *Faith and Repentance*; and ſometimes thoſe Two were reduced to One, and Either one: In the ſame manner doth he treat Faith: Sometimes it's Object is but *One*, and ſometimes *Two*, and ſometimes *Either* of the two; becauſe they are Two in Notion, but inſeparable in Action.

There are Two Kinds of Objects of Belief.

I. *The PERSON in whom we believe.*
II. *The WORD which we believe upon Credit of the PERSON.*

And the Promiſe of Eternal Life is given ſometimes to the *One*, ſometimes to the *Other*, ſometimes to *Both* joyntly.

1. Sometimes it is given to believe in the *Perſon* of Chriſt; and this is more frequently, becauſe it is the Ground whereon the other is built. Thus we find in our Lord's Diſcourſe with *Nicodemus* and *Martha, and the Cloſe of* St. *Johns Goſpel.*

2. Sometimes it is given to belief of the *Promiſe.* Thus St. *Paul* in his Entrance upon that accurate Diatribe concerning the *Reſurrection*, telleth the Corinthians, *This is the Goſpel by which they muſt be ſaved.* And when he pleaded, that *for the Hope of the Reſurrection he was called into queſtion*, he ſpake no leſs Truly than Wiſely: becauſe that is the Subſtance of our Belief.

3. Sometimes it is given to *Both joyntly.* As we found, *Rom.* 10. 9. *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy Mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thy Heart that God hath raiſed him from the Dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.* And the *Athenians* thought St. *Paul a Setter-forth of ſtrange Gods, becauſe he ſpake ſo much of Jeſus and the Reſurrection*; ſuppoſing *Anaſtaſis* to be the Goddeſs of *Jeſus.* Theſe two are ſo nearly allied, that they cannot be ſeparated: For whoever believes in Chriſt, as the Son of God, muſt upon his *Credit* authoriſed by his *Reſurrection*, believe his *Promiſe*, that they ſhall have a Reſurrection Themſelves. Yet nearly as they are allied, they are not the Same, and therefore require to be treated ſeverally.

Firſt therefore we ſhall ſpeak of what

is first in order of nature, *Belief in the Person*: and this that we may do the more distinctly, we shall consider.

1. *What kind of Person our Lord requireth us to believe him to be?*

2. *What is meant by believing in him?*

I. Concerning the Former, *viz. What kind of Person our Lord requireth us to believe him?* We must consider, that at That time the World was big with Expectation, and earnest in longing for such a Person, has never blessed it since its first Creation; a Person of whom such glorious things were promised as dazled their Understandings; a Person that must excel *Moses* in Miracles, *Joshuah* in Victories, *Solomon* in Riches and Wisdom; All *Prophets* in Knowledge, and all *Kings* in Power: the *Son*, and yet the *Lord* of *David*, who should not only free them from the then galling Yoke of the *Romans*, but subdue those *Romans*, and with them all their Provinces: the time of the promised coming of this great Person was now fulfilled, and their Longings sharpned to so much the greater Keenness.

This *fulness of time* our Lord made the Subject of his first Sermon, saying, *The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand*: This was so notoriously known, that it made the Jews obstinate even to madness in defence of their City and Temple against the *Romans*; yea, it made so much, and so loud talk in all the East, that the Noise reached to *Rome*, and contributed not a little to *Vespasian's* Advancement to the Empire: because (saith the Historian) *percrebuit sermo*, there was common Talk that at That time there would arise in the East a Person that should govern the World.

Such an one had *Daniel* promised, *Dan.* 7. 13. *There was given him Dominion and Glory, and a Kingdom that All Nations and Languages should serve him*: The Title there given him, is no other than the *Son of Man*, which our Saviour oft times assumes to himself; which that we may understand how much it may import, we must consider, that the Jews had some peculiar Idioms, whereof two principally did import the eminence of the subject spoken of.

1. They left that indefinite, which they would imply to exceed any Definition: *God do so to me, and more also*, was a Curse which signified more than any Expression could define: *Therefore I will do This unto thee, and because I will do This unto thee, therefore prepare to meet thy God, O Israel*, said the Prophet; whereby he threatned a Judgment, and required an Attonement *Extraordinary and Unexpressible*.

If our Title [*Son of Man*] seem not sufficiently accounted for by this Idiom, and the Prophet *Daniel's* Prophecy; some other of his Characters will, *Joh.* 8. 24. He saith of himself, *If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins*. The word *HE* is sufficiently indefinite, but the Original not having so much as that, is much more so. The Baptist sent two of his Disciples to enquire if he were ὁ ἐρχόμενος, *The Comer*, or *He that shall come*, and the Multitude blessed him in the *Name of the Lord*, under that Character. The *Messia* is a Great, but Indefinite Title. Anointing was a Complement of the greatest Kindness and Honor that could be bestowed on a Guest; and from that Office in festival Receptions, it was preferred to a Ceremony toward the highest Dignities. *Prophets*, *Priests*, and *Kings* were enseated by it; and our Lord is thereby charactered, but indefinitely, whether *Prophet*, or *Priest*, or *King*, or *All*.

2. Another Idiom of advancing any Thing or Person, was by entitling it to *God*; thus *Rivers of God*, *Mountains of God*, &c. were the most eminent in their Kind: *Man of God*, signified the most excellent Prophet; *Kingdom of God*, the most excellent Govenment; and *the Son of God*, was by *Daniel* made a Character of the greatest

greatest Beauty and Majesty. For whereas by that Phrase he described the 4*th*. in *Nebuchadnezzar's* Furnace, we are not to imagine that he pretended to have seen the *Son of God*, and thereby to know who were like him in Garments or Countenance; but that he used that Phrase as the highest Expression of extraordinary Beauty.

These high Characters, the *Messia*, or *Christ*, and the *Son of God*, and the *Comer*, are given our Lord, sometimes severally, sometimes joyntly. St. *Paul* testifieth to the Jews, that *This Jesus that I preach unto you, is the Christ*; St. *John* professeth, *these things are written that you may believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*: and *Martha* declareth, *I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the World*. And lest it might seem possible that some other Person might be capable of all these, however extraordinary Eulogies; to exalt him *above every name that may be named*, he stileth himself, not only the *Son*, but the *Only begotten Son of God*.

The other Characters speak an unmeasurable Excellency, and this last a singular and incommunicable one: and upon this Singularity of his being *the only begotten Son of God*, expressed by his being *anointed before he came into the World*, we shall anon find him prefer himself above all that were upon less accounts called *Gods*.

These and the like high Characters speak him a Person of Supereminent and unmeasurable Greatness; a Person like (his emblem) the light, so glorious, that by our last intent view we cannot plainly discover any thing of it but this, That we cannot discover. And this is so far from hindering the Belief which he requireth, that it is the very reason why we are obliged to pay it. For as we therefore believe in the Light, because the same Brightness which dazleth our Eyes if we fix them directly upon its Fountain, plainly sheweth us every thing that it shineth on; so our Lord, whose Divinity maketh the Dignity of his Person unintelligible, is for that very reason to be believed in with our utmost Confidence. And thus himself expresseth,

II. *What is meant by believing in his Person?* For *John* 12. 35. *Jesus said* unto them, *yet a little while is the Light with you, walk while you have the Light.* ——*While you have the Light, believe in the Light, that ye may be the Children of Light*. In which Words he plainly declareth, that all Men are *Travelers*; what the Light is to Travellers, That himself is to the World; and therefore what Confidence the Traveller hath in the Light, the same must we have in Him.

Should the Wisest, the Greatest, yea, All the Men in the World, or an Angel from Heaven, contradict the Light, the Traveller would not abate his Belief in it: should any Authority whatever tell him, that is a Tree, which the Light telleth him is a Stone; should they tell him that is a Path, which the Light telleth him is a River; should they perswade him to go where the Light sheweth a Precipice, or that there is no Path where the Light sheweth a plain one; he would with a little Variation apply to them all the Authentick Rule, *Let the Light be true, but every man a Liar*.

Thus is it, that we are to believe in *Christ*. for thus *Abraham* believed in *God*, maugre all Difficulties which his Affection to *Isaac*, and all the Contradictions which his Reason could oppose, the one against his Obedience, the other against his Confidence. And this is our Saviour's Claim, *ye believe in God, believe also Me*, i. e. with the same Confidence.

Where the Importance is unvaluable, no Care can be too great: we shall therefore most carefully and distinctly consi-

der, that the Light of the Sun may be lookt upon two ways, either with a wary Eye, diligently but obliquely, obſerving what it ſhewed by its Beam; or with a direct Eye, curiouſly viewing and endeavouring to diſcover its Features. So our Belief in Chriſt may look upon him under two Reſpects: with reſpect to the *World*, as its *Saviour*; or with reſpect to his *Perſon*, as the *Son of God*.

I. *With reſpect to the World*: Every one ſeeth the Sun to be its greateſt Benefactor, bountifully communicating all the Comforts, yea, the very Beings, which every of its Inhabitants enjoyeth. And at this Bounty is the Reaſon of the Suns ſhining, ſo it is no *Leſs*, yea, it is *More* underſtood by the Traveller on his Road, than by the Philoſopher in his Cell. Thus it is with the *Sun of Righteouſneſs*, his Title is the *Saviour of the World*, and his Buſineſs is to make good his Title. This made him *riſe with healing in his Wings*, and for This Reaſon he requireth ſo to be believed in, as the Sun is by the Traveller, who directeth every ſtep by its Light.

Whatever the Capacity or Opinion of the Traveller be; whether he be an illiterate Clown, that thinketh the Sun no bigger than the Earth; whether he believe the Light to be an Accident, or Subſtance; whatever his Thoughts be of the Nature, Magnitude, Diſtance, *&c.* ſtill the Sun is his faithful Guide, whenever he walks by its Light.

And that this Practical Faith is all that our Saviour requireth, ſeemeth plain, as by other Evidences, ſo by his own Words: For when the Jews came about him, and ſaid unto him, *How long doſt thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Chriſt, tell us plainly*; and he in anſwer thereto, called God his Father, *they took up Stones to ſtone him, becauſe* (they ſaid) *thou being a Man, makeſt thy ſelf God*: he did not, upon ſo preſſing an Occaſion, aſſert his Right, but abating ſo much as exceeded their Comprehenſion, ſatisfied Himſelf (that he might ſatisfie Them) with what might be ſufficient for their Conviction to Salvation: *Is it not written in your Law* (ſaid he) *I have ſaid you are Gods? If he called them Gods to whom the Word of God came, and the Scriptures cannot be broken, ſay ye of him whom the Father ſanctified and ſent into the World, thou blaſphemeſt, becauſe I ſaid I am the Son of God?* That he ſpake this in compliance with their Capacity, not their Rage, appeareth, becauſe when they would not be appeaſed, he eſcaped with pleaſure out of their Hands, ſince it was ſufficient to their Salvation, to know how and why he came into the Word, and that (as his Work, ſo alſo) his Perſon was greater than ever had been in it ſince its Creation; he ſpeaketh nothing of what he had been from Eternity in Himſelf, but what he was in Relation to the World, and in Compariſon with all other Meſſengers of God to it.

To Them (ſaith he) God ſent his Word by their Betters, but it is not ſent To Me by my Betters, but By me to my Inferiors; They were ſent into the World the common Way, and were afterward ſanctified by receiving Gods Word; but I was firſt ſanctified, and afterward ſent; and if they who were Leſs extraordinary, were honoured with a higher Title, being called *Gods*; can it be Blaſphemy in me, who am their Superior, if I take to my ſelf a meaner Title?

Thus did he (like *Elijah*) contract himſelf to their Dimenſions, requiring only ſuch a Meaſure of Faith as was ſuitable to their Underſtanding, and his own Deſigns. Where he not greater than *Moſes* and all the Prophets, he could not have competent Power to advance ſuch a *Kingom of God*, as muſt abrogate Thoſe Laws which were writ-

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ten by God's own Hand. It was therefore necessary he should require such a Belief in his Person, as might bring the World into subjection to his Scepter: Less than this cannot serve his Ends, and More than this he doth not require.

CHAP. VII.

Of Belief with meer Respect to the Person of Christ. Inquisitiveness concerning his Incarnation censured: First, because Impertinent.

II. *With mere respect to his Person*, it is no more necessary that we should understand what he is, than it is for a Traveller to understand the Features of the Sun. When the great Question concerning the Eternity of his Godhead first embroiled the World, the Emperor *Constantine*, by the most esteemed of his Bishops, sent to the Heads of the contending Parties, an every way gracious * Letter, perswading each of them to silence: wherein we find many Sayings for quieting the Dispute, more worth than all that since hath been written for deciding it. We shall take notice of Three.

1. He condemneth it as a silly Question, fitter for Fools or Children, than Priests or Wise Men. And this he presseth no less than eight or nine times. How justly, we may discover in three particulars.

1. *It is impertinent to our Lord's Design.* 2. *It is Fruitless to the Contemplators own purpose.* 3. *It is Dangerous.*

1. *It is impertinent to our Lord's Design.* For as the Sun doth not shine upon the World to gain to its self a small Reflexion of its Light from a Jewel, or the praise of a Philosopher, or any less reason, but only to benefit the World; so neither did the *day-spring from on high visit us* for any other reason, but to bring *healing in his Wings.*

Whoever thinks otherwise, must dishonour him more, and more effectually deny his Divinity, than ever any Heretick did: for he must suppose at least some Proportion, between the Breath of Man and the Blood of the Lord.

The Clown may think the Sun no bigger than his Bushel; but whoever hath the least Tincture of Astronomy, is astonished at the vast Disproportion, wherein the whole Earth falleth short of any one fixed Star; and when he further considereth what innumerable Multitudes more are discovered by the Telescope to his Eye, and beyond that to his Reason; upon consideration of such a stupendious Disproportion between the Earth and so many Worlds, both for Greatness and Brightness; he can not think so highly of its poor Inhabitants, as to conceive their great Creator should be so greedy of a little of their corrupt Breath, as to purchase it with such a Fall from Heaven. Himself observes to us, that those who *exercise Authority* among Men, *are called Benefactors*: could we harbor such base Thoughts of our Lord

* Euseb. *vita* Constant. *lib.* 2. *c.* 67.

Lord, as to degrade him from the Dignity of a Benefactor, to the Meanness of a Tradesman, and that in the vilest Ware too, we must implicitly deny his Divinity; but to suppose him so unskilful to his poor Trade, as to pay for his base Ware, infinitely more than its worth; this must cast no less Dishonour upon his Wisdom than his Majesty. Yet this we must do, if we think he will grant Salvation upon no other Terms, than a Belief of the whole Truth concerning the Dignity of his Person. For this will imply, either that he Came and Suffered on purpose to purchase to himself the Honour of such a Belief, or that he denieth to his faithful Servants That Benefit which he came into the World on purpose to purchase for them.

We may do well a little farther to consider, that That part of Mankind which our Lord most favoureth, are most unable to pay him such a Belief. He made it matter of Thanks that his Father had *hid the Gospel from the Wise and Prudent, and revealed it to Babes*; and afterward St. *James* observed, that *God had chosen the Poor of this World Rich in Faith*: Yea, when the Baptist sent two of his Disciples to our Lord, asking, *art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* our Lord answered him not in one Syllable, Negative, or Affirmative; but put him to spell out the Truth by Signs, among which this was the Last, *to the Poor the Gospel was preached*: which as it was a Completion of Prophecies, so was it a Sign of the *Messia*, equal to his *mighty Works*. And must the Poor, who were the First-Born of the Gospel, whose Condition our Lord honoured with his Birth, as he did their Persons with his Conversation, who in all Parts of the World, First embraced the Faith, and in all Ages make the much greatest Numbers; must they be excluded from the Benefit of Christ's Redemption, only because by his Providence, they are excluded from the Means of Understanding the Mystery of his Incarnation? They may with their humble Simplicity outdo the Subtilest School-men in Obedience to our Lords Commands, *i. e.* they may with less Knowledge, produce more and better Fruit: and must They perish for want of such a Belief, as is morally impossible for them to acquire, though they desire and endeavor no less to conform their *Belief* to the Doctrines, than their *Practices* to the Commands of their Saviour?

That such a Conceit is no less contrary to the Belief of the First Preachers and Believers of the Gospel, than it is to the first Dictates of Reason and Religion, no Enquirer can be unsatisfied. St. *Paul* finding Disciples at *Ephesus* that had *not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*, but had only been baptized *into John's Baptism*, told them no more of Christ but this, that *John indeed baptized with the Baptism of Repentance, saying unto the People, that they should believe on him that should come after him*, i. e. *on Jesus Christ*; *when they heard this, they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus. And when* Paul *had laid his Hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with Tongues and prophesied.* When the *Ethiopian* Eunuch believed that *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*, of whom *Isaiah* prophesied; *Philip* immediately admitted him to Baptism. At one Sermon, Three Thousand became Disciples: Can any Man imagine that they understood the whole Mystery of the Incarnation?

In the next succeeding Ages, as the Gospel spread farther over the World; so did the Curiosity of Doctors improve in explaining its Mystery, and their Zeal in pressing those Explications upon the Belief of Disciples: Yet in *Justin Martyr's* Time, though they themselves believed the Godhead of Christ, they did not so impose this Belief upon All Disciples, as

to deny Them to be Christians, who did not come up to it. This is plain by the Words of that Father to * *Tryphon* the Jew: *Though* (saith he) *I shall not prove that Christ is God otherwise, than by proving that This is the Christ, and that it was foretold that he should be such; yet it will be just that thou shouldest believe me to be deceived in that one Point, and not deny that this is the Christ, though he seem to be a Man born of Men, and said to be chosen to be Christ. For there are some (my Friends) among us, who profess him to be the Christ, and affirm him to be Man born of Men, with whom indeed I do not agree; nor will many speak so, who are of the same Opinion with me.* By which Words it is plain, that however the Belief of Christs Godhead was then most generally received, yet were not the otherwise minded excluded from the benefit of his Redemption as Unbelievers.

Such was the Faith, and such the Charity of the best Christians, before Prosperity had made them wanton, and Disputacity fierce. But now that the Question hath cost so much Pains, Contention and Blood, it hath gotten a new Value, not from any new intrinsick Worth, but from the Price which it hath cost. This is the only Reason of the Value of Diamonds, and This Question is like them, Costly, Hard, and Useless; and to most Eyes, as bright too. For it seemeth that the Honour due to our Lord's Person, must impart a suitable Value to every Question wherein it is concerned; and then it will follow, that we cannot slight this Great one, without some Neglect or Contempt of our Lord himself.

But on the contrary, the Worth of a *Proposition* lieth not in its *Matter*, but its *Form*; not in its *Terms*, but their *Connexion*; and if this be unworthy of Those, the Proposition is so far from being the more to be valued for the Dignity of its Terms, that it is to be despised, and perhaps, condemned for debasing them, by a Position unworthy of them. Though it be not reasonable, yet its possible to make a Pin of Gold; in such a case, it will not be an Undervalument to the Metal, to say, that such a Pins Point is nothing worth, because it hath very little of the Metal, and nothing of Serviceableness in it; but we must justly censure him that should put that soft noble Metal, to an Office fit only for a baser and harder one. It is not the Matter, but the Point of this Question which is now under Consideration, and we do not disregard, but honour our Lords Person, when we censure a Dispute which employeth in it Boys play.

Such was the Judgment (we see) of the great *Constantine*, when the Game was first set on foot; and such afterwards was that of *Leonas*, sent by *Constantius*, to moderate in the Council of *Seleucia*, who finding the Bishops fierce and endless at this *Pushpin*, dismissed them with this just Reprimand, * *Go, and play the Fools at Home.*

* *Ad Tryph. Jud.*

* *Socrat. Lib.* 2. *Cap.* 23.

CHAP. VIII.

It is Fruitless towards the Inquirers own Satisfaction.

II. A Second Evidence of the Folly of such an Enquiry, is this, That it is *Fruitless* toward the Questionists own Satisfaction; This is pressed by the good Emperor, in these Words, *How few are there that can exactly enough discern, or worthily*

worthily enough expreſs the force of Matters ſo weighty and abſtruſe? Or if there be any that believeth he can ſo do, how few are there among the Multitude, whom he can enable to underſtand it? And this is lively repreſented in our Lord's Emblem: The Brightneſs of the Sun, which to the Traveller plainly ſheweth his Way; but if looked upon with a fixed and ſteddy View, endeavoring to diſcover the Features of his Face, will ſhew nothing but the Weakneſs of the Gazers Eyes; which now it will not inſtruct, but Dazle; and the Light of the Goſpel to a faithful Believer, ſheweth ſo much of our Lord's Perſon, as muſt make us truſt in his Words concerning the Way to Salvation; but if we will needs enquire into the *Myſteries* of his *Divinity* and *Incarnation*, we ſhall find our Underſtandings no leſs confounded by the Brightneſs of the Myſtery, than our Eyes are by that of the Sun. And of this the Holy Ghoſt ſeemeth to warn us, not only by a careful Silence concerning our Lords Genealogy, but by expreſs Types and Prophecies concerning its Inſcrutability.

This was ſo known a Character of the *Meſſia*, that the Jews, thence derived an Objection, *We know this Man whence he is: but when Chriſt cometh, no Man knoweth whence he is: He is a Prieſt for ever, after the Order of Melchiſedec*, of whom it is induſtriouſly obſerved, that he was *without Father, without Mother, and without Deſcent.* Two Evangeliſts trace his, (our Lords) Genealogy: but as they derive it not from his real, but ſuppoſed Father; ſo do they take two ſevery ways, not to ſatisfie, but amuſe us. What is this but to admoniſh us againſt Curioſity? The Pedigree of his Fleſh might eaſily have been, either Cleared, or Unmentioned. Had the Evangeliſts been wholly ſilent concerning it, we had leſs wondered: but that they ſhould profeſs to inſtruct us, yet doubly diſappoint us; firſt, by deriving it from a wrong Father, and then by diſtracting us between two Ways; what is this, but to verifie the Prophets Deſcription of the Meſſia, *Who ſhall declare his Generation?* And what doth this ſo careful Concealment of his Generation, according to his Human Nature, ſignifie more plainly, than a warning againſt ſearching after the Eternal Generation of his Divinity? If it were needleſs (and therefore leſt impoſſible) to prove him derived from *David*, which was one of his moſt revealed Characters; how can it be otherwiſe, to underſtand That Generation of his, which muſt needs be ſo much the more above our Underſtanding, as the Nature of God is above our own?

But Licouriſhneſs after forbidden Fruit, is the Original Sin, whereof all the Sons of *Eve* are guilty, and the Chriſtian World hath been a greater Example, both of the Sin and the Puniſhment. For as ſoon as the Emperor became a *Nurſing Father*, Teaching Fathers grew wanton. And the Biſhop of *Alexandria* boldly anſwered the Prophets Queſtion, *I will declare his Generation*; but he did it in ſuch nice manner, that *Arius* a Presbyter, cavelled at it as contradictious; and while either of them was tenacious of his own Aſſertion, all the Eaſtern Churches were embroiled with fierce Contentions. To quence this Fire the good Emperor ſent to the Heads of the contending Parties, his abovementioned Letter, which not availing, he convened a General Council at *Nice*, of all the Biſhops of the Empire, who juſtified the Biſhop, and excommunicated the Presbyter, who afterwards exhibited a Confeſſion of his Faith to the Emperor, who glad to find it conſonant to the *Nicene*, ſent it to a Council then aſſembled

bled at *Hieruſalem*, That Council approved of it, and ſent their approbatory letters, both to the Emperor and the Biſhop of *Alexandria*, whom thereupon the Emperor required to admit *Arius* to Communion. But the Biſhop anſwered, that *Arius* was excommunicated by a General Council, and may not be reſtored by any leſs Authority. And that the Diſobedience might appear Neceſſary, an important word is found wanting in *Arius*'s confeſſion. And that word is now made matter both of Condemnation againſt *Arius* who omitted it in his confeſſion, and of Diſputes among the Biſhops, who ſubſcribed the *Nicene*.

For thus ſpeaks one of the moſt partial Hiſtorians. *Socr. l. 2. c. 18. As we plainly find by ſeveral Epiſtles which after the Council Biſhops wrote to one another, the word* [Conſubſtantial] *grievouſly troubled ſome of their minds: in ſifting whereof while they ſpent much time and pains, and too nicely endeavouring to deſcribe its force, they raiſed among themſelves an inteſtine war, and what they did, differed nothing from fighting in the dark; For they ſeemed not at all to underſtand why they railed at each other.* A hundred and fifty years had this blind diſpute raged, and at laſt was Determined as Blindly as it had been managed. For the Emperor *Theodoſius*, finding *Conſtantine*'s way unſucceſsful, becauſe the zeal of neither party would admit of Silence or Toleration; took another courſe, by Silencing the One, and Authoriſing the Other: So he forbad all men to contradict what was taught by the Biſhops of *Rome* and *Alexandria*.

Thus was the Knot cut which would not be untyed: Yet are we not even thus Diſentangled. For later Ages, diſputing the queſtion in the Schools with leſs Heat, but more Subtility, have determined the queſtion quite otherwiſe than *Athanaſius* had done. For thus ſaith *Athanaſius* in his Dialogue of this Subject: *The divine nature is common to Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, as the human nature is common to Peter, James, and John.* And when the Adverſary objects, that then *Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt muſt be Three Gods, as Peter, James, and John are Three men:* He demeth that *Peter, James and John are Three men if they be of one Mind, becauſe then they are one in the Lord: But a Heathen, a Jew, and a Chriſtian, are three men, becauſe of three minds.* And with a nearer reſemblance he addeth, *the Father, Son, and H. G. are as Biſhop, Prieſt, and Deacon; but Biſhop, Prieſt, and Deacon are ὁμοούσιοι, therefore ſo are Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt.* Athan. *dial. de trinit.*

And might not a Heathen at this rate juſtifie Polytheiſm, provided his Gods diſagreed not among themſelves? The School-men therefore will not ſtand to this ſtate of the queſtion, but diſtinguiſh between *Perſon* and *ſuppoſitum rationale*; which (yet) they cannot ſo do as to ſatisfie themſelves, and therefore ſhelter themſelves in their impregnable fort, *Myſtery*, and thence thunder upon the adverſaries both of This and of another no leſs beloved *Myſtery*: For they make this their cock-argument for *Tranſubſtantiation*; That ſince the Scripture is no leſs expreſs for the *One* than the *Other*, and the Contradictions no leſs groſs in the One than in the Other, therefore we muſt embrace the one as well as the other.

To this Objection of the *Romaniſts*, and to others of the *Unitaries*, we have found an Anſwer, that we muſt not infer from our Own Nature to God's; for that Ours is Finite, and God's is Infinite: Three Perſons among us are Three Men, becauſe they

agree in one Common Nature; but the Divine Nature is not a Common one, but a Singular; and therefore Three Persons do not make Three Gods. If you understand not this, you must not Wonder; or at least, you must not Gainsay it: For it is a *Mystery*, which Reason may not pretend to fathom.

Why, if it be a *Mystery*, and must still be so, to what purpose do we Enquire into it, or Dispute concerning it?

The General that marched his Army a whole dark night, and in the morning found himself in the same place whence he marched, would never have so harassed Himself and Them, had he known he should have gotten nothing but sweat and dirt by his pains. And if we know we must at last lie down in the same dissatisfaction, which the very name of a Mystery importeth, why should we not do it rather Without toyl than After it? To dispute concerning a *Mystery*, and at the same time confess it a *Mystery*, is a contradiction as great as any in the greatest *Mystery*.

That it was a Mystery to those very Councils which determined it, may appear, not only from the various Confessions made by several Councils, (whereof *Socrates* reckoneth no less than Nine,) or the Contrary determinations of several counter councils, (who condemned each others as the Emperors chanced to influence them,) but by the wavering of the very same Council: For that of *Sirmium* framed two or three, one whereof they would fain have reneged, and laboured all their possible to call in all its Copies.

Mysteries are seldom barren, nor hath this been so. This hath not indeed been so fruitful as That of Transubstantiation, but it hath brought forth Sufficient, and more than the best understanding can well maintain. If Reason cannot comprehend how there can be three Persons in the same Individual Nature; no more can it, how the same Individual Person can have Two Natures, and those so unequal as the Human and Divine. To avoid this, there can be but two ways imaginable in Reason: either Christ must be Two Persons, because he hath two such different Natures; or He must have but One Nature, because he is but One Person: And either of of these had its advocate.

That *Nestorius* asserted two Persons in Christ, if it appear not by his express words, is inferred from his exception against the Blessed Virgins Eulogy. He said she ought not to be stiled *Mother of God*, and This raised Dissentions over all the Eastern Churches, so like those that were begotten upon the mother *Mystery*, that another Historian describeth them in the very same words: *Men fought as in the dark, now one way, and then another; and what they asserted they immediately denied.* To determine the dispute, a Council is called, which condemneth *Nestorius*; who thereupon was himself quiet, but could not make the question so.

Eutyches on the other hand asserted, that the Divine Nature swallowed up the Human; so that, however they had been Two Before conjunction, yet Afterward they were but One. This also made great stirs; a Provincial council at *C. P.* deprived him, then a more general one at *Ephesus* restored him, and deprived the Bishop of *C. P.* Then *Leo* Bishop of *Rome*, whose Letters had been slighted by the Council of *Ephesus*, obtains of the Emperor a General Council at *Calcedon*: There *Dioscorus*, that had been President of the former Council, is accused of divers uncanonical Proceedings; and that he might be baited as an Heretick, the Epistle of *Leo* Bishop of *Rome*, and another of *Cyril*, Predecessor to *Dioscorus* in the See of *Alexandria*, were read; which done, the Bishops in Council cried out,

This

This is the faith of the Fathers, This is the faith of the Apoſtles, We all believe ſo, the Orthodox believe ſo, Anathema to them that do not believe ſo; Peter hath declared ſo by Leo, the Apoſtles taught ſo, Leo piouſly and truly hath taught ſo; This is the faith of Archbiſhop Leo, Pope Leo believeth ſo, Leo and Cyril believe ſo, &c. And when at the receſs, the queſtion was to be cleared, it was propoſed in this form, *viz. Whether do you agree with Dioſcorus, who ſaith, that Chriſt conſiſteth of two Natures; or with Leo, who ſaith there are two Natures in Chriſt?* they cried, *they believed Leo, and held for Eutychians all that contradicted them.* The very queſtion in its terms was a Myſtery, but the bottom was Clear: *Dioſcorus* had ſlighted the authority of the Biſhop of *Rome*, and the Councils buſineſs was more to advance that See above all Churches, by vindicating its authority againſt *Dioſcorus*, than to aſſert the truth againſt *Eutyches*; and they were jointly provided for in the ſentence, which ſaith, —*Therefore the moſt holy and moſt bleſſed Archbiſhop of the great and ancient Rome, Leo, by us and the preſent Council, and the bleſſed and ever to be praiſed Peter, who is the rock and baſe of the Catholick Church, and foundation of the Orthodox Faith, hath deprived him* (Dioſcorus) *of all Epiſcopal Dignity, and utterly abdicated him from all Sacerdotal miniſtery.* Yet did not ſo Pontifical a Sentence fright the Emperor *Baſiliſcus*, ſo as to hinder him from writing a circulatory Letter, wherein he condemned this deciſion of *Leo*, and all the acts of this Council of *Calcedon*, requiring them to be burnt wherever met with: nor any of the Biſhops of *Aſia*, either from ſubſcribing That Letter of the Emperor's, or ſending to him Another of their own, wherein they prayed him, *not to ſend any other contrary to it; otherwiſe the world would be overthrown by Sedition, That Council of Calcedon having occaſioned infinite bloodſhed.*

After this, when the Emperor *Heraclius* endeavoured to perſwade *Catholicus* to believe (as himſelf did) that Chriſt had *two Natures*, and was by him asked, whether he had alſo *two Wills, and two Actions*; puzzeled at ſo ſurprizing a queſtion, he ſent it to the Patriarch of *C. P.* who anſwered it negatively: but the Biſhop of *Hieruſalem* convened his Suffragans, and demonſtrated, that thoſe who believe but *One Will*, muſt believe but *One Nature*; and then the Emperor publiſhed an Edict, that *men muſt not aſſert either that there is One or Two Wills and Actions in Chriſt.* But his Grandſon called a Council which aſſerted *Two Wills*, and anathematized them who aſſerted but *One.*

Yet after this again, the great Emperor *Juſtinian* began to compel the Biſhops to confeſs, *that the body of Chriſt was not capable of any ſuffering or change*; and had not death prevented the accompliſhment of his deſign, he had not only Reſtored the *Eutychian* Hereſy, but Outdone it.

Thus have we pointed (and only pointed) at ſome of the Many intangling Queſtions, which puzzeled and divided the ſubtileſt wits of ſeveral Ages, and were at laſt decided by no other Evidence, but of Imperial and Papal Authority; ſufficient to Silence diſputes, but not to Stabliſh truth. And who is he that is not diſcouraged from giving a Confident aſſent to what is this way obtruded upon his belief; or ſearching into thoſe Myſteries, that have ſo confounded the greateſt Clerks? Who can penetrate into ſuch Hypermetaphyſical Niceties, or reconcile ſuch oppoſit Aſſertions? Who can moderate between the Patrons and Adverſaries of Conſubſtantiality, then between its Patrons Themſelves, and then again between its Firſt Patrons and the

Schoolmen? Between the Orthodox and the Neſtorians, on one ſide, and Eutychians on the other?

We have before proved ſuch a work Needleſs to ſaving Faith, becauſe the Poor, *i.e.* the Greateſt and, (perhaps the) Beſt part of the world may be ſaved without it; and now we find it Impoſſible to be accompliſhed by the greateſt Clerks, becauſe the more they Search into it, the more they are Confounded: And if Authority muſt at laſt determine it, what better than that of the Great *Conſtantine*, which doth not give Approbation to Either of the Sides, but cenſureth Both, not of Error, but of Folly.

Chap. IX. *It is Dangerous.*

III. A Third evidence of the folly of ſuch an Enquiry is this, that it is *Dangerous*. He that looketh upon the face of the Sun with a fixt eye, loſeth more than his Labour: for he hurteth his Eye; and Story ſpeaks of ſome, that quite loſt their ſight by it. *He that pryeth into the Myſtery, will be oppreſſed with the glory*, is a known Aphoriſm; he that boldly aſſerteth any thing concerning it, runneth himſelf upon Danger, ſo much Greater, by how much Higher the Matter of the queſtion is, and by how much Greater the Difficulty is of keeping right, without making a wrong ſtep.

The good Emperor in his abovementioned Letter, gave good warning of this double danger, *We ought to reſtrain our ſelves from talking, leſt when We cannot ſufficiently explain the Queſtion, or our Hearers cannot ſufficiently underſtand our Meaning: either way the people be driven upon a neceſſity of Blaſphemy or Contention.*

The Danger is double. Firſt, Leſt the Height of the Queſtion run us into Blaſphemy; and then, leſt the Difficulty of it run us into Error: we ſay nothing of the Danger of loſing Charity by contention, That being too ſenſibly proved by Experience.

1. There is *danger* of *Blaſphemy*: for tho the Queſtion appear Silly upon the two accounts now mentioned, yet is the Deciſion Formidable, becauſe of the concern which our Lord's perſon hath in it. Soon after the Council of *Nice* had determined it, *the Biſhops began to diſagree among themſelves while they too curiouſly examined the word ὁμοούσιος: for one ſide thought that thoſe who uſed that word ſpake Blaſphemy, as thinking the Son to have no ſubſtance of his own; and the other ſide accuſed thoſe who thought otherwiſe, and hated them as Heathens, becauſe they brought in the worſhip of Many Gods.* On either ſide, the fall is dreadful, and if we be ſo fool-hardy as to adventure our ſelves upon ſo Dangerous a Precipice, what Commiſſion have we to expoſe our Lord's Honour, or our Brother's Soul to the hazard? If the bold enquirer Eſcape the danger of Error at Laſt, he is already fallen into a great one, by ſo mean an opinion of our Lord's Perſon, as to think it Comprehenſible.

We ſometimes ſee Children in meer Sport and Bravery walk on the top of high and narrow Walls, and This we allow as pardonable to their green underſtandings; but in a full grown man, we ſhould cenſure the Folly equal to the Danger; and both the one and the other ſo much greater, by how much the Wall were both Higher and Narrower: What then muſt we judge of thoſe, that adventure upon the double danger, of Error from the Abſtruſeneſs of the queſtion, and Blaſphemy from the Height of it? Either party chargeth the other with no leſs than Blaſphemy; and he that will adventure himſelf in ſuch a Controverſy, had need of a ſteddy head, and firm footing. But,

2. This

2. This is a second danger, that we have *no firm ground* to go upon. How Unsound all Topicks are, we need no other evidence but this, that all are challeng'd by either party with equal assurance. *Scriptures* the *Arians* capt with the Orthodox. *Antiquity*, they ever claimed with the same confidence. *Councils*, determined sometimes on one side, and sometimes on the other, as the Emperors chanced to influence them. The only advantage of the Catholicks, is long Possession, and that, after Sentence. This may suffice to silence the adverse side, but hardly to satisfie either the one or the other, if those Historians may be trusted, whose professed partiality to the prevailing side, hath preserved their works from Time and the Emperor's Edict. They have indeed so handled matters, as to hide much, and varnish all; yet even so, we may pick out enough to justifie an appeal, by observing how that Possession was first obtained, then continued, and at last settled.

1. The Controversie was *first decided* by the great Council of *Nice*, whose Decree therein hath ever been esteemed equal to Scripture, even by those who in other things reneg its Authority. Yet in this, rather than any other subject may we wave it, upon a sufficient reason offered us by another Council, which confirmed both that Council of *Nice* and *Arius*'s Confession. For that of *Antioch* in their Letters to every City justifie themselves in these words, * *We do not follow* Arius, *but receive him when he cometh to us*; *for how can it be said that we who are Bishops, follow* Arius *who is but a Presbyter*? If this have any sence, it must be of as good force at *Nice* as at *Antioch*; and thereby, we may judge of the Sentence, which first determined the controversie, not by the Merit of the cause, but Interest of the parties.

2. The *Progress* of the Controversie was of the same piece. For when *Arius*, after his Condemnation, exhibited such a confession of his Faith, as satisfied both the Emporor and the Council, then sitting at *Hierusalem*; and came with Letters from both, to his Bishop to be restored; his Bishop refused it, saying, that it was *not lawful to restore one that was excommunicated by the whole Church*; the Emperor angry at the affront, sendeth his mandatory Letter, threatning to deprive him if he disobeyed: And now the Controversie was transplanted, from *Bishop* against *Presbyter*, to *Ecclesiastick* Authority against *Secular*. For though a pretence was found, to cavil at the want of an important word in *Arius*'s confession, yet that this was no better than a mere pretence, appears, because many who had subscribed the Decree of the Council of *Nice* seconded the Emperor against *Athanasius* whom a Council at *Tyre* condemned, and the Emperor Banished to *Treves*, where he remained during the Emperor's Life.

After whose death the Emperor *Constantine* sent him back to his Bishoprick, alledging that his Father intended it, had not death prevented him. After the death of this Emperor, *Constantius* again banished him, and he fled to the Bishop of *Rome*, who recommended him to *Constans* Emperor of the West, who so espoused him and his cause, and wrote so effectually in his behalf to his Brother *Constantius*, as to require him upon pain of War to restore him.

Constantius for peace's sake complied, and after the death of both of his Brethren, Patron of *Athanasius*, upon sentence of a Council at *Antioch*, deprived him; he fleeth again to *Rome*, whose Bishop again embraceth him

* *Socrat. lib.* 2. *c.* 7.

not only as a Champion of *Eccleſiaſtical* Power againſt *Secular*, but as an opportune occaſion of advancing the *Roman* See above all other *Chriſtian Churches*. For by his Pontifical Letters he commanded the Biſhops of the Eaſt, at a day by himſelf named, to ſend their Deputies to give him account of their proceedings againſt *Athanaſius* and his party, threatning to deprive them, if they acted any more in ſuch manner. The Eaſtern Biſhops ſcoffed at ſuch his Letters, and in a Council at *Sardis* excommunicated him for communicating with thoſe whom themſelves had excommunicated; and the Weſtern Biſhops in requital excommunicated the Eaſtern; ſo from a controverſie between *Eccleſiaſtical* and *Secular* Authority, roſe an immortal Schiſm between the *VVeſtern* and *Eaſtern* Churches; the latter whereof, though they agreed in oppoſition to the Uſurpations of the See of *Rome*, yet grievouſly contended among themſelves in That queſtion which was the Mother of all Contentions.

After one hundred and fifty years ſtruggling, the Emperor had this account given him (*a*), That the Weſtern Churches were kept quiet, but the Eaſtern were full of tumult. If we examine the Reaſon of the Former part of the aſſertion, and the Truth of the Latter, we find, that the *VVeſtern Biſhops* were eaſier to be led by the great Biſhop of *Rome*, not only by reaſon of the Greatneſs of his City, but by reaſon of the Smalneſs of their own Underſtandings; which were ſuch, that at the Council of *Ariminum*, the greateſt of all for number, they were circumvented by the Subtiler Greeks, and that ſo groſly (ſaith the (*b*) Hiſtorian,) that when it was propoſed, whether they would worſhip Chriſt or ὁμοούσιον, they cried they believed not *in homouſium, but Chriſt*. As for the Later part of the aſſertion, the ſame Hiſtorian, *ca.* 2. ſays, that the *Arians* had all the Eaſtern Churches except that of *Hieruſalem*.

3. The long and miſchievous controverſie was at laſt Settled by *Theodoſius*; who having received his Inſtructions and Baptiſm from a *Conſubſtantialiſt*, required all his Subjects to conform to *That Religion, which* Peter *the Prince of the Apoſtles from the beginning had delivered to the* Romans, *and which at That time* Damaſus *Biſhop of* Rome *and* Peter *Biſhop of* Alexandria *held: and That Church only ſhould be eſteemed Catholick, which worſhipped the Divine Trinity with equal Honour, and thoſe who held the other, ſhould be called Hereticks, made infamous and puniſhed.*

This we may therefore call *Setling* the controverſie, becauſe thenceforth all ſucceeding Emperors and Biſhops wrote after this Copy; and both the parties have ever worn thoſe Titles, which the Emperor by his Imperial Power (as the unqueſtionable Fountain of Honour) was pleaſed to beſtow upon them.

Behold now the ground, on which one of our Fundamental Articles of Faith is Built! Behold the juſtice of That plea, which from ſuch a poſſeſſion would preſcribe to our Belief! We have traced it from its ſpring, with no worſe intent than to appeal from the great *Theodoſius*, who put it Above diſpute, to the greater *Conſtantine*, who put it Below diſpute; and to ſilence the clamour of Hereſie againſt One party, by ſilencing the whole Controverſie in Both.

And certainly, whoever ſhall carefully obſerve, how the now ſtabliſhed Doctrine was from firſt to laſt advanced by groſs partiality

(a) *Sozomen. li.* 7. *ca.* 4. (b) *Ruffin. li.* 1. *c.* 21.

of the moſt guilty kind, and at laſt impoſed by a Novice Emperor, upon ſimplicit Faith in two Biſhops, of whoſe Sees the One brought it into the World, and the Other maintained it, and a new coined Tradition lately obtruded by the guiltier of thoſe Sees, but Unpleaded, becauſe Unheard of, in thoſe former Long and Miſerable times, which it Might and Ought to have delivered from the convulſions they ſuffered: Whoever I ſay ſhall carefully obſerve this, and withal, what foul tricks the Church of *Rome* uſed in the Weſt, and with what ill ſucceſs in the Eaſt, whoſe Churches did at laſt more univerſally embrace *Arius*'s opinion than at firſt they condemned it; may be tempted to number the *Athanaſian* among the *Roman* Doctrines, and cannot but think it fairly dealt with, if (its boaſted poſſeſſion pardoned) it be left upon the ſame level with the *Arian* equally unworthy, not only of our Faith, but of our Study.

If further we conſider (what the Hiſtorian expreſly declareth) that at the riſe of this controverſie, moſt of the Biſhops underſtood not its meaning; we cannot think it neceſſary to Salvation, that every private Chriſtian ſhould believe That as an Article of Faith, which the beſt Ages of the Church thought not worth knowing.

And if Biſhop *Alexander* himſelf, the firſt Author of the Nicety, and Head of the party, thought fit to tolerate the oppoſite *Arians* (as the ſame Hiſtorians aver,) we can ill pretend to Charity, if we allow them no Title to Gods Pardon, or his Churches Communion.

And more or leſs than this we pretend not: we retort not *Theodoſius*'s ſentence of Hereſie, Infamy, or Puniſhment; we accuſe none but the Uncharitable of either ſide; nor mention Blaſphemy, but only to perſwade Silence, as the ſecureſt way to eſcape it; or Hereſie, but only as a warning to Herd with the Primitive Chriſtians and Martyrs, who departed this World before this unhappy queſtion came into it, and are ſaved Without Diſpute.

The *Athanaſians* abhor Polytheiſm no leſs than do the *Arians*: If their Poſitions ſeem to infer it, they deny the Conſequence; if this contradict the rules of Reaſoning, they avow it, for they allow *Reaſon* no hearing in *Myſteries* of Faith. If this make them *Hereticks*, it is not in Religion, but in Logick.

On the other ſide, the *Arians* profeſs to believe of Chriſt whatever himſelf or his Apoſtles have ſpoken; and where one expreſſion in Scripture ſeemeth to contradict another, they take ſuch a courſe to reconcile them, as the Laws and Cuſtoms of all the World direct. It is very frequent for Rhetorick to Exceed, but never to Diminiſh the Grammatical character of a perſon, whoſe honour the writer profeſſeth to advance; and upon this account they think it more reaſonable, that thoſe expreſſions which exalt our Saviours Perſon to an Equality with the Father, ſhould ſtoop to thoſe which ſpeak him Inferior; than, that thoſe which ſpeak him Inferior, ſhould be Strained up to thoſe which ſpeak him Equal: And however, this is the Safer way, ſince it will lead us to ſuch a belief as will Suffice for That end, for whoſe ſake alone Belief it ſelf is required.

He that ſo believeth in Chriſt, as the Traveller doth in the Light, that with confidence in his Promiſes ordereth every ſtep by the direction of his Precepts, knowing that no Ordinary, much more no Wiſe and Good man, will condemn thoſe Means as inſufficient, which effect the End for whoſe ſake they are Preſcribed; will not doubt, but his diligence in his gracious Lord's Service will obtain his Pardon for any ſincere error, though it fall ſhort of full payment of Due honour to his

Perſon;

Perſon; yea, he will believe, that to think otherwiſe, were an error more Unpardonable, becauſe more Diſhonourable, to That Juſtice and Goodneſs, which make his chief character.

Yea, if from his Clemency in Pardoning, we turn to his Juſtice in Puniſhing; either party may in That Court plead for Juſtification.

This is the ſum of the Promiſes given by our Lord to ſuch as believe in him. He that ſo believeth in Him as the Traveller doth in the Light, ſhall in the end as certainly attain Eternal Life, as the Traveller doth his Journeys end; though concerning our Lord's Perſon he may be as much miſtaken, as the Ignorant, but Induſtrious Traveller, who knoweth nothing of the Greatneſs of the Sun's Body, or the Nature of its Light. For as the End when Accompliſhed, juſtifieth the Means to be Sufficient; ſo a Divine Life juſtifieth the Faith that Worketh it, and the Perſon that Hath it.

But Faith cannot produce This Effect, further than it proceedeth from the Perſon to his Words; which therefore only are believed to be True, becauſe the Speaker is believed to be Faithful.

We muſt therefore proceed to enquire, What are thoſe Sayings of our Lord, which upon the credit of his *Perſon*, Saving Faith is to believe in order to Eternal Life?

Chap. X. *Of the* WORD *or Matter which is the Object of Faith.*

THus far we have conſidered the *PERSON* in whom we are to believe: Come we now to the other obj & of Faith, the *WORD* or Matter, which we muſt take upon credit of that Perſon. This maketh more trouble in the World than its difficulty requireth. The diſagreements of the Reformed among themſelves is a ſcandal to the Romaniſts, who thence infer, That there is no reſt but in the Boſom of their Church, which will embrace none who do not ſubmit their underſtandings to her Dictates. The Reformed, beſide Recrimination, (which is perhaps a Sufficient, but not Honourable plea,) anſwer, that their diſagreements concern not *Fundamental*, but only *Indifferent* truths. Hereupon the Romaniſts call for a Catalogue of Fundamentals: and did they do it ſincerely, Charity would require a compliance with the demand; but as long as they profeſs themſelves obliged to believe all the determinations of their Council of *Trent*, it is plain, that ſuch a Liſt would do them no other ſervice, but to be caſt as a bone of contention among thoſe, who according to the Largeneſs or Streightneſs of their minds, judge more or Fewer Articles neceſſary.

Our excellent Dr. *Hammond*, to ſilence the clamorous with a juſt character of a *Fundamental*, hath written an expreſs Treatiſe, diſcovering that the word importeth Relation to a *Building*, which muſt be thereupon ſuperſtructed; and ſince holineſs of life is the Building, every Article of Faith muſt be juſt ſo far Fundamental, as it ſupporteth That Building. This is a Great Truth; but how Inſufficient for our Satisfaction, needeth no

no other evidence than the admirable Doctor's own Enumeration, which every one will not receive for adequate: It is like an Advertisement in a Gazette, which however Exact, cannot secure me from Mistake, if I meet the Man described.

We shall therefore shew, not only the Marks, but the Person; not only such Qualifications as are necessary to make a Truth worthy to be matter of Faith; but those individual Truths, which our Lord hath expresly advanced above all their Fellows to that Dignity.

I. The Qualifications for Matter of Faith must be principally these,

1. It must be *Easie to be understood by the meanest Capacity. To the Poor the Gospel was preached*, and by such it must be understood, that it may be Believed. Beside plain Justice, which will not Reap where it hath not Sown; beside what we have heard of the Apostle's Boast, that the *light of the Gospel cannot be hid, but to those whose eyes* are not only Dimm'd, but quite *Blinded*; and of his Jealousie, lest the *Corinthians* minds *should be corrupted from the Simplicity which is in Christ*: Beside these and other Evidences, it is worth Observation, that the same Apostle in his Epistle to the *Romans*, wherein he disputeth against the Jews, in behalf of the *Righteousness which is by Faith*, as opposed to *that which is by the Law*, is careful to prevent any Conceit, that the Matter of Faith was more Obscure than that of the Law; and therefore *ch.* 10. *v* 6. *&c.* he reciteth the Boast of *Moses*, Deut. 30. 12. applying them to Faith in Christ: No Height, nor Depth, nor Distance of any kind, putteth it out of reach; it is not only in our Eye, but in our Mouth; and to put the Truth beyond suspicion, in the *9th Verse* he giveth us a plain account both of Person and Matter: *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; and this* (saith he) *is the word of Faith which we preach.* By which and the following words it is plain, that Apostle was so far from thinking it an Honour, that he judged it a great Defect, if there were any Difficulty in Matter of Faith.

It is true, he speaketh with much amazedness in his Epistle to the *Ephesians*, of a great Mystery, which (yet) though it seemed hard to him to be believed, is easie enough to be understood; for it signified only this, That the Gentiles were Fellow heirs of the Promises with the Jews: And when he instructeth *Timothy* how to behave himself in the House of God, he telleth him of the *great Mystery of Godliness*, which concerneth only the *Person* to be believed in, but not the Matter to be believed. And in no other word of Scripture do we meet the least Intimation of any Boast or Confession, that Faith hath any hard Task for the the Understanding to perform.

2. It must be *an expres Word of God*; so saith the Apostle in the *17th Verse*, *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* And so saith the very Nature of Faith: It is Justice to God's Veracity, and therefore can have nothing to do, where there is no *Word* to believe.

It must not be denied, but plain Reason is another Word of God; and therefore what that inferreth by incontestable Consequence from a written word, must be received with a Belief equal to the Evidence of that Consequence: But if the Relation between the written Word and rational Consequence be so remote, that none but a skilful Herald can derive its Pedigree; then is a good Christian no more obliged to believe such an Inference, than is every good Subject to be a good Herald.

That our Lord trebled his Command upon St. *Peter*, *to feed his Lambs*, we believe with utmoſt aſſurance, becauſe we find it in the written Word, and thence infer that he gave him Authority and Power to preach the Goſpel, inſtead of his former employment in Fiſhing, becauſe plain reaſon inferreth, that he could not otherwiſe perform the Office of a good ſhepherd; but that he thereby commiſſioned, not only St. *Peter* in Perſon, but all his ſucceſſors in the See of *Rome*, to rule all Perſons and Nations, that in all Ages ſhall be of Chriſt's Flock, with as abſolute Power as a Shepherd doth his Sheep, and that all the Flock muſt obey him with the ſame tameneſs as the Sheep do their ſhepherd: This can therefore be no matter, either of Faith or Reaſon, becauſe the Conſequence is beyond the ken of any Eye or Teleſcope.

3. Matter of Faith, properly ſo called, muſt not only be expreſly revealed, but *Expreſly honoured with the Promiſe of eternal Life to the Believer:* For though all God's Words be Equally (becauſe Infinitely) *True*; yet are not all equally *Goſpel*. That St. Paul *left his Cloak behind him*, and wrote to a Biſhop to bring it after him, we believe with as much Confidence, but not with as much Deference, as that *Chriſt died and roſe again*. Our Saviour preached many Moral Truths, which (yet) were not properly Matters of Chriſtian Faith, becauſe the World was acquainted with them before Chriſt appeared in it. We muſt therefore carefully diſtinguiſh between what is written, and what is Goſpel: and that to the Goſpel only, and not to any other Truth, was given the Promiſe, *Mark* 16 15. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Goſpel to every Creature. He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.* It is to the Goſpel, and to the Goſpel alone, that this Saving and Damning Power is given by our Saviour; and therefore whoever aſcribeth it to any other Doctrin, however true, yea, however revealed, maketh himſelf Equal to Chriſt in Authority, and Superior in Faithfulneſs: Equal in Power, by Granting or Denying Salvation; and Superior in Faithfulneſs, by diſcovering ſome way to Salvation, and ſome Danger of Damnation, which our Lord left undiſcovered; and conſequently, leaving every ſincere Believer in danger to periſh without Fault. For then, whoever doubteth or Disbelieveth the Additionals, though he believe all that our Lord hath required, (which are no ſmall nor mean part of Chriſtians,) muſt periſh, not for ſtraying from the Faith, but for want of a Faithful Shepherd.

And here I cannot but repeat my former complaint, That in the midſt of ſuch hot Diſputes concerning the very Principles of our Religion, the moſt obvious and moſt important Remarks are neglected. In the Diſputes concerning *Juſtification by Faith*, we found St. *Paul* might be reconciled with St. *James* in that queſtion; in the ſame manner as with Himſelf, in the Promiſe he had made of every Man's eſcape, with the Warning he afterward gave of their Danger, if the Mariners went off; the one and the other equally accounted for, by a plain Rule, that *All Promiſes imply whatever is neceſſarily ſuppoſed.* And in the Matter now before us, we have another, and (if poſſible) a greater Blunder of the ſame kind. Nothing can be more *Obvious*, *Important*, or *Neglected*, than this (not Remark for our Reaſon, but) plain *Matter of Fact*; that there are *Some Truths offered to our Belief* by our Lord and his Apoſtles, *With a Promiſe annexed*, and others without any ſuch Promiſe; and from this undeniable and unavoidable Truth, theſe Corollaries will force themſelves upon us.

1. *There*

1. *There can be no need of an Interpreter of Scripture, or Determiner of Doubts concerning matters of Faith.* For if those words of Scripture, which inform us of what is *Necessary to be believed*, be so plain and so often repeated, that no Man can miss their true meaning; then every Man's own Faculties are so far Infallible, as to put him out of danger; and if any other Word of Scripture be doubtful, there is no harm if it remain so still; but if any, out of meer love to truth, sincerely labour to find it out in all its corners; his Endeavours will be accepted, and his Mistakes (if he fall into any) will be pardoned.

2. *The Scriptures cannot be denied to be Sufficient*, though they may have suffered the common Fate of all long-lived Books, by Carelesness of Copiers, Fraud of Hereticks, or Dust of Time.

Many of the Apostles Writings (doubtless) are lost; but that hindereth not the Sufficiency of those which we enjoy: yea, if all the rest of the Scripture were lost, but only those Texts which proclaim those Truths, to the Belief whereof eternal Life is promised; those few Texts would be sufficient. Nor doth this slacken our Obligation to Thankfulness for the rest; for as it is in Temporals, so it is in Spirituals; God's Bounty is not measured by our bare Necessities; he is *Rich towards us*, supplying us not only with Necessaries, but Conveniences; not only Bread of Life to keep us from Perishing, but many other Truths to feast our Curiosities, wherein (yet) as in corporal repasts, he requireth Sobriety.

3. *We need not, ought not to be uncharitable to any who differ from us in other Doctrins, to the Belief whereof the Promise is not appropriate*, especially if they agree with us in those, to which it is so. We are sure that they are *Heirs with us of the same Promise*; and if we hate them who love God, and are by him beloved, such Uncharitableness is both a greater Error and a greater Crime, than their Mistakes in doubtful things can be.

4. And which is now in our Eye, *There can be no need of a Catalogue of Fundamentals*, because the Scripture hath particularly enumerated what Truths are necessarily to be believed.

Did not our Eyes compel us to it, we should hardly think it possible, that any who had the least acquaintance with the *N.T.* could escape the discovery of so plain a Truth. When we therein find a Doctrin treated like *Mordecai*, with a Proclamation before it, *Bow the knee, Thus it shall be done to the truth which the Lord delighteth to honour*; and others left in the Street, among the vulgar Truths of Natural Religion; what reason can doubt, which of these are Saving Truths, and which Indifferent?

Should *Ahasuerus*'s Officers have set up or suffered *Any others*, much more should they have suffered *Many others*, to have rode in the same level cheek by jole with Him, had not this deprived both *Mordecai* of his Honour, and the King of his Obedience? and would not the Cavalcade have been so much the more Criminal, by how much it had been greater? How comes it then to pass, that those Truths which our Lord hath exalted above all others with the like singular Honour, should be levelled with others which are so far from any such Marks of his Favour, that he hath left them unregarded, and disputable, whether they be Truths or Errors?

I know no way to unriddle so strange a *Phænomenon*, but by that common saying, *Inter arma silent leges*. There hath been so much disputing about Questions, that we have not heeded things Unquestionable; though that would as certainly bring Peace to our Minds, as the Law would to

the State, if they might be paid their due.

Thoſe who are forbidden the uſe of their Bibles are excuſable; but thoſe who dare read them, muſt needs think themſelves obliged to *Search the Scriptures, for in them they think they have eternal Life, and they are they which teſtifie of the Doctrines* which are promiſed it.

The Task is every way very Eaſie; it will require very little Pains, and no Art. The meaneſt Beggar in the Street underſtood the King's mind concerning *Mordecai*; and ſo may any Man that will heed what are thoſe Truths which are honoured with a Proclamation of eternal Life; and beſides, we are more concerned to heed ſuch a Proclamation.

We have already obſerved, that the Apoſtle plainly told the Romans, *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus, and believe with thy heart that God hath raiſed him from the Dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.* Do we in the whole New Teſtament find any other Doctrin ſo honoured? We again meet the ſame more pompouſly proclaimed, 1 *Cor.* 15. *I declare unto you the Goſpel which I preached unto you, which alſo you have received, and wherein you ſtand, by which alſo you are ſaved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, if you have not believed in vain.* Then cometh the ſame Truth, with ſomewhat of the ſame Pomp, *That Chriſt died for our ſins according to the Scriptures, and that he roſe again according to the Scriptures.*

It will be objected, That this cannot be the Faith which our Lord ſo importunely called for, becauſe this was not performed till after the time of his Preaching was paſt: Let us obſerve *Mark* 16. 14. *He appeared to the eleven as they ſate at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardneſs of Heart, becauſe they believed not them which had ſeen him after he was riſen: And he ſaid unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the Goſpel to every Creature, He that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.* The Command coming in the ſame breath with the Reproof, plainly intimateth, that the *Goſpel* which they muſt preach, was the ſame which themſelves had been ſo backward in believing. However *Luke* 24. 46. both his Reſurrection and his Promiſe are made matter of Faith; *For he ſaid unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoveth Chriſt to ſuffer and to riſe again from the dead the third day, and that Repentance and Remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name among all Nations; and ye are witneſſes of theſe things.*

That the Apoſtles took the laſt of theſe words for the ſum of their Commiſſion, appeareth by what they ſaid and did after the death of *Judas*, Acts 1. 21. *Wherefore of theſe men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jeſus went in and out among us,——muſt one be ordained to be a witneſs with us of his Reſurrection.* And accordingly throughout the reſt of that Book, do we always find them inſiſt upon this, as the main of their buſineſs.

In the former half of theſe words doth our Lord argue it neceſſary, that his Death and Reſurrection ſhould be foretold and performed; that Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins might be preached in his name, *i. e.* as by him promiſed, and by his own Reſurrection ſecured; for the Remiſſion which the Prophets had promiſed, reached no further than Temporal Puniſhment; but that which Chriſt promiſed reached after Death to everlaſting Life.

This is plain by the Apoſtle's Diſcourſe abovementioned, which as he cloſeth with a Triumph over Death, *the ſting of death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the Law, but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, ſo he buildeth the aſſurance of our own victory upon that of Chriſt; *If the dead riſe not, then is Chriſt not raiſed, and if Chriſt be raiſed, your*

Faith

Faith is vain, you are yet in your sins. If the Consequence be good one way, it is so the other: If the Being in our Sins follow from the denial of Christ's Resurrection, then must Remission of Sins import Resurrection from Death. Both of them depend upon the Relation between Sin and Death. *The sting of death is sin*; and again, *the wages of sin is Death*; and therefore a full and perfect Remission of Sin, cannot but import a full and perfect Deliverance from Death.

So the Sum total of the Gospel, which our Saviour himself preached in his Life-time, and commissioned his Apostles to preach after his Resurrection, is this, That those who believe in him, shall upon Repentance have such a full Pardon of Sin, as to be delivered from Death; and that Christ who hath promised this, hath given us an Earnest of it, by rising himself from the Dead.

There is indeed an under-truth or so, which is prest upon our Belief as Necessary. For the Apostle telleth the *Galatians*, *If you be circumcised Christ profiteth you nothing, you are fallen from Grace, you are debtors to the whole Law.* This I call an Under-truth, because it implieth a Belief of Benefits promised by Christ, part whereof was a *New Covenant*, better than that of *Moses*: This we heard promised by the Prophet, and insisted on by the Writer to the *Hebrews*, as the Character of the Gospel; but was so far from being by our Lord honoured with a Promise of Eternal Life, that the Apostles themselves doubted of it, till the Holy Ghost had decided it in Council.

Nor is this an Exception to our Rule, that it is beyond the Power of all the Men in the World, yea, or of all the Angels in Heaven, to make any thing an Article of Faith, which the Holy Scriptures have not made so, by annexing to them the Promise of Eternal Life, which therefore we now find to be it self no less the *Matter*, than the *Reward* of Faith.

CHAP. XI.

Of the manner of the Resurrection, whether in the same Body or another.

THat a Resurrection from the Dead is the proper Matter of the Christian Faith, we have (I hope) sufficiently proved: but concerning the Manner thereof, it doth not so plainly appear what we are to believe. The Apostle, in that solemn Diatribe, that he might leave nothing untouch'd, advanceth either a Question or an Objection in the 35th Verse; *But some man will say, how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?* If an Objection, it may be thus urg'd; the Dead are so buried, that it seems utterly impossible their Bodies should be restored: Princes many times have their Bowels buried at great distance from their Limbs, some whole Nations burn their dead, many are drown'd in the Sea, where they are devoured by Fishes, those Fishes again by others, which perhaps come to the Market and feed other Men; and by many other ways are the Particles so dispers'd, that it seems utterly impossible to retrieve them.

If this be objected against the Truth of Resurrection, the roughness of the Apostle's Answer will be just; they are Fools in doubting God's Omnipotency: all these or whatever other Changes any man's Body may undergo, are not greater than the Chymist makes in his Mercury, which yet again he easily recalls to his form. He that

that made all things of nothing, can by the same powerful Word command every Particle to its proper Body; nor is he less a Fool who doubts whether God will do this if he have promised it; because it is possible for God to perform such a Promise, but it is not possible he should break it. But if the Question be, Whether God has promis'd this, so that we do not doubt either his Power or his Veracity, but only our own apprehension of the meaning of his Word; this doth not impeach any of God's perfections, but only our own understanding: it cannot be Injustice against God, whom in the midst of such doubts we undoubtingly believe to be infinitely true: but it is justice to our own understandings, which we do not only believe, but know to be fallible. If therefore we find the same Words vulgarly used in another Sense, more agreeable to plain Reason and God's Perfections; then may we easily enquire, first, *Whether any promise of God does necessarily import a restitution of the same numerical matter?* if not, then may we proceed to enquire, secondly, *Whether it be honourable to God, and more serviceable to the Designs of the Gospel, that we believe the contrary?*

First, *Whether the Word of Promise necessarily imports a Restitution of the same numerical matter?* This is fully and clearly answered, as soon as in common speaking we find the same Words used in a less rigid sense: but if we observe how the Apostle himself hath answered this very Question, the least that we thence learn is this, That such a meaning is not matter of Faith, since he hath left it doubtful, and the contrary more probable: for thus he answers, *Thou Fool, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but God giveth it a body as it pleaseth him, and to every seed its own body.* Does not this plainly deny a Resurrection of the same numerical Particles? Thou sowest a little single Grain, which when it is corrupted, riseth in Root, Stalk, Blade, Ears, and Grains, thousands of times more in matter than was sowen; God giving the body, and yet to every Seed its own. What consequence can thence be clearer than this, That every one may at the Resurrection receive his own Body, tho' it be not the same that was buried?

And we may yet farther consider, that this is the constant way of Nature in all living Bodies, which we reckon the same while they keep the same Forms, tho' they change every Particle of Matter: Grant therefore, that those Words of *Job*, *Tho' worms consume this flesh, yet with these eyes shall I see God*, express his confidence of a Resurrection; yet will they signifie no more than this, That tho' perspiration consume every atom of my Flesh, yet shall my Eyes be as much the same, and see as well, as if there were no change in them; and if there be no more required from other Topicks than from the Letter of the Promise, we are at liberty to believe what shall seem most probable. The usual Arguments are two; first, from God's Justice, and secondly, from the Serviceableness of the Belief.

First, it is argued, *That it is just that the same Body which was sharer in the Sin or the Service, should also be sharer in the Punishment or Reward.* But if we will speak properly, the Body hath no share either in the one or the other; for Matter neither acteth nor perceiveth, but the Soul by the matter. 2 *Cor.* 5. the Apostle likens our Body to an House, and to Cloaths; the Man dwells in the one, and moves in the other, yet neither the one nor the other shares Life with him; and therefore to argue, that it must be the same Body that shall receive Punishment at the Resurrection, is the same as to say, the Malefactor must be Executed in the same Cloaths wherein

wherein he committed the Crime.

So many years past between the Injuries which *Joseph* received from his Brethren, and the Honors which he received from *Pharaoh*, and thereby his whole body was so changed, that his Brethren knew him not; and there were yet greater Changes both in His and Their Bodies, before their Father's Death; yet were not their Consciences changed, but in their Old Age they feared his Revenge for the Cruelties of their Youth: and if humane Justice punish an old Crime, tho' between the Act and the Discovery every Particle of the Body be chang'd, because the same Soul makes him the same Person; how can we doubt but Divine Justice may at the Resurrection do the same?

Secondly, *Whether it be more honourable to God to believe the one or the other*, is the same as to ask, Whether it be more honorable to salve all his Perfections, or to rob one that we may cloath the other? If we so believe, as to magnifie God's Veracity in performance of his Promise, and his Justice in distributing Rewards and Punishments; will it not more justifie his Wisdom, to believe that he will act suitably to that order of Things which himself hath established, than that he will unaccountably exercise his Omnipotency? It is not (we confess) it is not for silly Men to prescribe Rules for God's Wisdom in its particular acts: but we must have a clear and distinct Definition of the Nature of Wisdom in general, otherwise we pay him but an empty Word when we ascribe that Perfection to him, and we might as much honor him by saying he is Unwise. Now, that Definition whereby we understand Wisdom, importeth a choice first of a good End, and then of suitable Means: if therefore the means be unsuitable, either in Kind or Proportion, that will make a defect in Wisdom. Should we see a Man yoke a whole Plough of Oxen, to draw a weight which a Child could carry in one of his hands, we should certainly think him better furnished with Cattel than Understanding: and to believe that God will by his Omnipotency work as many Miracles as he shall raise Bodies, when all his Promises may be as well verified, and all his good Ends as well promoted in a way less miraculous, must be no less a Diminution of his Wisdom than Exaltation of his Power, since all that exercise of Power which tends to no good purpose, is vain and impertinent.

Let us then consider to what purpose is the Resurrection promis'd, and our Belief of it requir'd? The Apostle hath proclaim'd two especially, first, *That our joy might be full*; and secondly, that we may *partake God's Nature*.

1. The Resurrection is therefore promised *that our joy may be full*: and if we consider the Strength of Wishes, and the Faintness of Hopes, which Mankind without Christ labour'd under; we may thence compute how great a joy the Promise may bring to a longing mind. The Words of *Seneca*, in his 102. *Epist.* gives us a good Hypotyposis of it: *I took pleasure to debate upon the Eternity of Souls, nay more, I was fully resolved therein; for I easily believed the Opinions of great Men rather promising than proving so great a matter. I gave my self over to this so great hope, and now grow hateful to my self; and now contemn the Reliques of my broken Years, being ready to be transferred into that immeasurable time and possession of that infinite Eternity, when as suddenly I was awakened by the Letter, which made me dismiss so sweet a Dream, which hereafter I will revive and redeem again as soon as I shall have satisfied thy expectation.* Such were the feeble Flutterings of the best humane Wisdom, wanting the Gospel.

The

The ſtrength of their Wiſhes raiſed them a little towards Hope; but wanting ſupport, quickly fell back again to Fear; ſo their Joy was no better than Suſpence, none of the eaſieſt poſtures.

In two reſpects eſpecially was their Joy defective; 1. *Want of Confidence to the Perſons from whom they received the Promiſes*; and 2. *Scantneſs of the Happineſs promiſed.*

1. They had no confident *Belief in the Perſons*, whom the Philoſopher calleth indeed *Great Men*, but complaineth that they *proved* not what they *promiſed*: They were Great, not by Nature or Commiſſion, but by Study; had no better Warrant for their promiſes, than what were dictated by partiality to their own Wiſhes, not the leaſt pretence of Power to make them good. But the Author of the Goſpel is a Perſon not only Great, but Infinite; and no leſs ſo in Power, than Faithfulneſs; ſo that there is no place for the leaſt diſtruſt.

2. Another, (and to the preſent purpoſe more conſiderable,) defect of human hopes was in the *Scantneſs of expected happineſs*; it was Immortality indeed, but a Carnal one. They pretend to anſwer *Job*'s complaint, by equalling a dead man's hopes to thoſe of a Tree, which ſprings again when it is cut down; but they had no thoughts of ſuch a Harveſt as the Apoſtle promiſeth. And that the hopes of the Phariſees were no better than thoſe of the Philoſophers, ſeemeth plain from that objection, wherewith the Sadduces pretended to gravel our Saviour: For it cannot be reaſonably imagined, but amidſt ſo long Converſation, and ſo many Diſputes, as had ſawed that queſtion between them; the Phariſees muſt needs have better informed them, if themſelves had underſtood the difference between the Preſent Life and the Future.

And now that our Lord hath ſo plainly revealed that we ſhall be ἰσάγγελοι, *equal to the Angels*, that his Apoſtle hath no leſs plainly declared, that our Lord will *change our vile Bodies, that they may be like his own Glorious Body*; that the Reſurrection ſhall make great and glorious variety of Changes, from Natural, to Spiritual, from Weak, to Powerful, from Corruptible, to Incorruptible, *&c.* That we ſhould ſtill be ſo fond of our load of Carrion, as to think it a diminution of our happineſs, if we be not again yoaked to the ſame dead matter; ſeemeth no leſs a contradiction to the deſires of Nature, than to the Promiſes of Scripture. This (ſay ſome) will be the joy of the Reſurrection, that the two old Friends meet and embrace each other. But a little conſideration will anſwer, that ſuch a meeting would not be of old Friends but of old Enemies. How can we read the 7th Chapter to the *Romans*, and find there deſcribed the *War between the Fleſh and the Spirit?* How can we hear that ſad cry, *Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this Body of Death!* yet think it matter of joy to be remanded to it again? Do we not find him often exhorting to *mortifie our members which are upon the earth*, and doth he not propoſe himſelf for example, *beating down his body and keeping it in ſubjection, leſt he ſhould be caſt away?* Or is the Apoſtle ſingular in this notion? doth not Natural Religion agree with the Chriſtian, and Experience with both, that Virtue is nothing elſe but a War againſt the Body in behalf of the Mind?

Either the Soul ſhall at the Reſurrection have a remembrance of her late dead Body, and the old converſation ſhe had with it or ſhe ſhall not: If ſhe ſhall not, then there can be no more joy if ſhe meet the ſame Old Fleſh, than if all be New: But if ſhe do remember her old Mate, and her old Converſation with it; then muſt ſhe remember all the Contentions ſhe had with it,

it, all the Wounds she received from it, all the Dangers which she hardly escaped by watching against it; and it seemeth very strange that the Soul at the Resurrection should find much matter of Joy in that Flesh, as it's greatest Friend, which did it's most, and had not Gods goodness assisted, would have prevailed, to make Resurrection it self infinitely miserable.

However, by our Present Thoughts let us judge of our Future. Were it put to our choice whether we would continue in the same Flesh, however exalted in accidents; or translated into another, which would not have the least Particle the same, but such Properties as should equal us with Angels; should we so regard our Dead Senseless Matter, as to make the least difficulty of shifting it? should we have such stupid fondness for our coarse nasty Rags, as in love to them to refuse Robes of Glory? Our Matter feels no more than do our Cloaths, and our Souls in such exhange, can feel nothing but excess of Joy in her new Robes: so that from this Topick will spring no necessity, that we should believe what we cannot rejoyce in.

II. Another great design of the Gospel, or rather the same in another dress, is this, That we may *have fellowship with God*, which St. *Peter* more plainly paraphraseth, saying *For this reason are given to us great and precious Promises that by them we may be made partakers of the Divine Nature.* Since therefore all the force which the Promises have towards effecting this good end, is derived from the Joy which shall reward them who are invited by such Promises to such Godliness: If we believe the Promises in such a sense as maketh them most Desireable; we thereby exercise such a Faith, as is most Serviceable to that Adequate End, for which the Promises are Given and Faith required.

And the difference in this respect is so small between the two Opinions, that no considering Person will abate his diligence in Gods Service, if he believe he shall be blessed with a Body so Glorious, so Vigorous, so every Way better than this, that he cannot have the least wish it should be the same.

In short therefore, this is not matter of Faith, but Curiosity. That we believe, that the faithful shall have a Resurrection to happiness greater than they can ask or think; This is therefore matter of Faith, because our Lord himself hath made it so, declared it to be the very reason of his coming into the World, and commanded his Apostles to preach it as his Gospel. This if we so believe, as thence to proceed to the Apostles most Rational and Godly inference, to be *stedfast and immoveable, alway abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*; we have then both *Matter* and *Soul of Faith*, and may securely rely on Gods faithfulness to perform his promise in the best manner.

AND now we have very Amply, and perhaps very Tediously, dissected That half of the Gospel, which filleth whole Libraries with Books of impertinent Subtilties. Whatever is disputed concerning any point of Religion (falsly so called) pretendeth to convince us of what we ought to believe in That Particular. But one or two General Aphorisms discovering Why and How far Belief it self is required, will silence all those endless (every way endless) Disputes. This so beneficial and neglected Work, we have endeavoured to perform

by diſſecting the whole Myſtery of the Goſpel.

That its buſineſs was to reduce the Jews from their Bondage under the Law of *Moſes*, and the Gentiles from their worſe Bondage under the Worſhip of Devils, to the Service of God by the free Directions of their own Nature: That to this end he *ſent his only begotten Son into the World*; teaching them that the beſt Service of God conſiſteth in being like him; and for their encouragement therein, promiſing them upon Repentance Pardon of Sins paſt, and everlaſting Life. And becauſe thoſe Promiſes could no otherwiſe be effectual, Faith muſt neceſſarily be called for, with importunity ſuitable, both to the Difficulties and Dangers which at that Time encompaſſed it, and to the Serviceableneſs which at all Times accompanieth it.

This is the Sum of the Goſpel: a Chain of Benefits let down from Heaven, worthy of God to beſtow, of Angels to admire, and of Man to rejoice in. In this Chain, the only Link which Man can reach, is Faith, and its whole worth conſiſts in its connexion with the reſt, and it's eaſineſs to be laid hold on.

And ſince it is incongruous that the Means ſhould be more difficult than the End; it cannot be, that Faith ſhould be more above the reach of an honeſt Mind, than the Holineſs which it is to ſerve.

No; it was firſt preached to the Poor, and where-ever it came, was firſt and beſt entertained by Such; it's one Learned Apoſtle renounced the *words which Mans Wiſdom teacheth*, and fell into jealouſie leſt his Diſciples *minds ſhould be corrupted* with *knowledge falſly ſo called*; and whether he had reaſon will appear by our next Enquiry.

ENQUIRY II.

What Changes or Additions later Ages have made in Matter of Faith?

THis we propoſed as a *ſecond* Enquiry: but it is not ſo properly an ENQUIRY as a Muſter; They are ſo Numerous and ſo Obvious, ſtand ſo thick in our way, and ſo juſtle us on every ſide, that it will not be difficult to find them, but to Range them into order.

The *General* change, which leadeth all the reſt, is the change of its *Place*. It is unlinked from the *Chain* wherein it is ineſtimably ſerviceable; and treated in its *ſingle* ſeparate Nature, as if it were ſome precious Diamond, valuable for Brightneſs, Hardneſs, or other irreſpective Virtue of its own.

We find our Lord honour it, as the great King did *Daniel* above all his Princes; we hear him declare, that himſelf came into the World to advance it therein, we hear him promiſe it Eternal Life; we hear both Him and his Apoſtle make it half the Goſpel; we meet it in every Page of the New Teſtament; and upon ſight of its ſo great Glory, we talk as St. *Peter* did, when confounded at the Brightneſs of our Lords Rayment and Countenance, *he knew not what he ſaid.*

We conſider not, that two of the Reaſons which induced our Lord to call ſo importunately for it, are by his good providence

providence not only expired, but turned to the contrary point, and its now adequate worth is its Serviceableneſs. It may boaſt as did the Vine in *Jotham*'s Parable, of *chearing God and man*, but it is by its Wine, not by its Timber. By This, it can neither ſupport its own feeble Limbs, nor furniſh a Pin whereby to faſten them to the Wall, where they are not worthy to hang but for the Fruits ſake.

Should our Lord require more of it than is ſerviceable, then muſt he require the Overplus without reaſon; and this would ſpeak him not a Good and Wiſe, but Humerſom and Capricious Lord: ſo by the ſame proportion as we Exalt the Dignity of Faith above its Uſefulneſs, we muſt Depreſs the Honour of our Saviour.

This therefore is the Mother-error, that whereas Faith is no better than a Retainer to Holineſs, we place it in the Throne as an Independent abſolute Prince. This I ſay is the Mother-error, and is parent of two others: For we think it our Duty to ſuch a Prince, to make it as great as poſſible: 1. by *enlarging its Dominion as far*, and 2. by *exalring its Prerogative as high* as we can; and ſo we overdo Truth in both.

I. *We extend the Empire of Faith as far as poſſible*; not only beyond its proper bounds, but beyond All bounds whatſoever. *Braſidas*, when asked how far the Territories of *Sparta* reached? anſwered, as far as I can caſt my Lance; and a Romaniſt, if asked, how far matter of Faith is extended? will anſwer, as far as the Pope ſhall declare any thing to be *de fide*. And that this may reach far and wide enough, the School-men have employed their Inventions, to make diſcoveries of ſuch Queſtions, and entangled them with ſuch Objections, as may ſeem Worthy and neceſſary to be defined. By this art have we gotten a vaſt Army of new Doctrins of Faith; and the Goſpel, of whoſe Simplicity the greateſt of the Apoſtles gloried, is become a Science of all others moſt perplexed. Our Modern Theology hath ſo much more of Metaphyſicks than of the Goſpel, that in defiance to St. *Paul*, who boaſted that the light of the Goſpel was ſo bright, as not to be hid to any but ſuch as had their eyes blinded by the God of this World; we may ſay of it as *Ariſtotle* did of the Science into which it is moulded, *it is ſo publiſhed as not to be publiſhed*, ſince there is hardly a word in it, whoſe full meaning is throughly underſtood.

Where the beſt eye can diſcover nothing but limpid liquor, the Microſcope findeth a multitude of little Animals; and where a plain underſtanding apprehendeth a clear truth, there a diſputatious Schoolman findeth a multitude of little Doctrins, as uſeleſs as thoſe Animals: The unhapy difference is, that the Microſcope pretendeth no more but to ſpring Game for our Curioſity; but the Schools impoſe their Dictates upon our Faith, not only as Worthy to be Known, but Neceſſary to be Believed.

It is not ſufficient for the Biſhop of *Rome* to ſet up for an Oracle; he pretendeth not only to declare what is True, but to Change the very Nature of Truth, by making That matter of Faith, which before was only matter of Curioſity; and thereby under the Title of Vicar of Chriſt, claimeth a power to deſtroy the Souls for whoſe Salvation Chriſt died. For whenever a new matter is made *de fide*, it is thereby made deſtructive to as many as cannot conform their Belief to

the Pope's Judgment. Had it not been disputed, it had not had any need to be so defined; and those who before opposed it upon what they took for good reason, cannot now find That reason the weaker; so the fruit of the Decision is only This, That the belief which before was Innocent, is now become Damnable.

They seem indeed to make ample amends, by the implicit Faith which they say will avail for the common People, to whom it shall be sufficient to believe as the Church believeth, though they neither Understand, nor so much as Hear of any Article of Faith, which by this Salvo are so far from being Multiplied, that they are Annihilated.

But 1. *Where are we commanded to believe thus implicitly in the Church?* and 2. *What is such a Faith good for?*

1. *Where doth our Lord require this implicit Faith in the Church?* He said (indeed) as he had reason, *Ye belive in God, believe also in Me*: But where did he say, Ye believe in Me, believe also in my Church? and

2. *To what purpose should he so command?* How is any man inspirited to Holiness, by believing he knoweth not what? What Fear or Love of God can be kindled, what Comfort or Joy advanced, what motive to Godliness actuated, by such an *uncertain sound?* Yea further, why must the Church in General, believe more than every Member in Particular?

We dispute not about words, and therefore grant the Church to be the Pastors; but still we ask, Why is it necessary even for Them, to believe more than our Lord himself required? If such a belief be worth a Command, shew us wherein that worth consisteth, and you will at the same shew our Lord to be defective in omitting such a Command: But if it have in it nothing worth commanding, then those who Impose it, do at once Invade our Lord's Legislative Power, and Defeat his gracious Purpose, of saving all that believe what himself required to be believed.

If there be any thing yet more intolerable, This perhaps may be so, That those who deny the Pope this imposing Power, assume it to themselves. *Heterodoxy* with them signifies no less danger, than doth *Heresie* with the Papists. They that want either Courage or Care to examin what they are taught, deny it to others; and as they believe without Reason, so do they without Measure.

If such a Man light upon truth in every little Question, he must be very happy, since they are contested with equal confidence on either side, mutually condemning each other as *Heterodox*, when indeed both sides are so; for the word properly signifieth such as hold other Opinions than the Word of God hath revealed, and such cannot be matter of Dispute.

II. They who thus extend the Dominions, do also *exalt the Prerogative of Faith*, above 1. *Measure*, 2. *Holiness*, 3. *Charity*, and 4. *Reason*.

1. *Those who extend its Dominions beyond its due limits, do also exalt its power above measure.* I say, *those who extend its Dominions beyond its due limits*: For within them we readily acknowledg its Power Absolute, and all Obedience due to it without reserve.

But the proper Dominions of Faith exceed not this one Proposition, that *God cannot ly*. This is the Great Commandment of the *Gospel*, and answereth the great one of the *Law*: as that saith thou shalt

ſhalt *Love*, ſo this ſaith thou ſhalt *Believe the Lord thy God with all thy Soul, and with all thy Might :* This, as it is a Truth of infinite Certainty, ſo muſt it have infinite Power upon our Belief, as we found it to have upon *Abrahams*, in defiance of all Oppoſitions that might have been made by Reaſon or Nature.

But there are other Truths, and thoſe (perhaps) vertually included in this great One; the Belief whereof muſt be meaſured by the Intereſt they may have in the proper Vertue of Faith, which we have found to be twofold. 1. *Juſtice to Gods Veracity*, 2. *Serviceableneſs to Piety.*

1. Some Doctrins are the immediate Apparent Iſſue of that great Truth, ſo plainly publiſhed in the Word of God, that he that runneth may read them: Others require cloſe Application, a good Eye, and perhaps, good Art too: Muſt all theſe Doctrins, ſo unequal in their Evidence, be received with equal, and that Supream Confidence?

If my confidence of the Truth of the Doctrin equal my Evidence that it is Gods Word, I make full payment of what is due to Gods Veracity: But if I doubt whether that which you tell me is Gods Word, be ſo indeed; this may be ſome defect of Juſtice to your Veracity, but it can be none to Gods: Convince me that God hath ſaid it, and my Confidence of the Truth ſhall equal that Conviction; till then, neither is Gods Veracity, nor my Faith concerned.

2. Another Worth of Faith is derived from its Serviceableneſs to that great and good End, for whoſe ſake the Promiſes are given us. And are thoſe Doctrins which are impoſed upon our Belief as *de fide*, are they all equally, all ſupremely Serviceable to Holineſs? Are not ſome More, ſome Leſs, and moſt of them Not at all ſo? And ſhall a Confidence equally Fruitleſs, Groundleſs, and Boundleſs, be accepted for my Juſtification, beyond a leſs Confident, but more Fruitful Belief, yea or doubt of a Propoſition, of which I have no better reaſon to believe that it cometh from God, but this, that you tell me ſo?

In a Word, If for this End the Promiſes be give us, *That by them we may be made partakers of the Divine Nature* (as St. *Peter* expreſly affirms) then he that receiveth them, and (which is more) he that receiveth any other Truths, with ſuch an Effectual Faith, as ſhall transform him thereinto, receiveth them with Confidence enough.

II. Some exalt Faith *Above* Holineſs, yea and *Againſt* it too. Not only the thorough-paced Antinomians and Solifidians, but many others, who call themſelves Orthodox, finding no intrinſick Work, proportionable to the great price at which they find Faith valued; Wilfully or Haſtily overlooking its relation to Holineſs, borrow it a value from its relation to the Perſon of Chriſt, which no Man doubteth to be infinitely valuable. *Faith* (ſay they) *is the Hand whereby we apply Chriſt to our ſelves; and by this Application, Chriſt is made Ours, and His Righteouſneſs imputed to us as if it were our own; and it juſtifieth not by his Own Worthineſs, but by the Merit of Chriſt, which it layeth hold on and applyeth:* And by this prety Conceit, any Degree of Real inherent Righteouſneſs is rendred not only Inſufficient, but Dangerous; there is no more hope of the Lewdeſt Rakehell, than of a Moral Man; the preaching of the Church-of-*England*-Men is deſpiſed, becauſe they Preach not Jeſus Chriſt, nor Faith in him, but Moral Stuff, *&c.*

If Holineſs of Life have any place among ſuch Doctrins, Thanks muſt be

paid

paid to Gods over-ruling Grace, and the deep Impreſſions of Natural Religion, not to be defaced by any oppoſite Nations: For if Chriſts Righteouſneſs be imputed to me as if it were mine own, what need I Labour for any other? Will not all ſuch Labour be worſe than loſt? Will it not caſt diſhonor upon Chriſts Righteouſneſs as inſufficient, and upon his Precepts, as Needleſs? Need I, Can I be more Righteous than Chriſt?

And where (in the Name of Chriſt) where do we in all the Book of God, or in Reaſon, meet any intimation of this fine Doctrin? *Application of Chriſt to our ſelves, the Hand of Faith, imputed Righteouſneſs*, &c. What are they but terms of Art, invented by falſe Apoſtles? We read indeed that *Abrahams Faith was imputed to him for Righteouſneſs*; and ſo ſhall it be imputed to us if we believe as He did: But ſtill it was *Abrahams* Own proper Faith, and not Anothers; and that Faith was no leſs Obedient than Confident. But what is that to Chriſts Righteouſneſs imputed to us, and that only by Virtue of laying hold upon him by an Application inverted? not by applying our Selves to Chriſt, conforming our ſelves to his Precepts and Example; but applying Him to our Selves, by meer forceable laying Hands upon him?

A certain Land was miſerably waſted by a raging Plague: A great Phyſician in compaſſion to the People, came among them, declared that he had a *noſtrum* which never failed them that truſted it, that it had been to himſelf very coſtly, but he would freely communicate it to all that needed and deſired it, and therefore exhorted every one to come to him for it. Many did ſo, and were infallibly cured; but others ſaid, there needed no more, but to truſt to the Medicine, the Phyſician was infinitely skilful in his Art, and faithful in his Promiſes; that therefore by confidence in him they ſhould have all his Health imputed to them, and that ſhould Cure them as perfectly as if they received real Health by uſe of his Preſcriptions. This is the very caſe now upon the Carpet: For look, how much the Sick Patient is cured by the imputed Health of the Phyſician, without a real remove of the Diſeaſe; juſt ſo much is ſuch a Believer juſtified by the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt imputed to him upon his confident applying of Chriſt to himſelf, with aſſurance of his being one of the Elect, without applying himſelf to Chriſt by conforming to his Nature and Commands.

Let us then for Chriſts Sake, let us apply our Selves to him with all Aſſurance of his Power and Deſire to ſave us; and let this Confidence deliver us up to an abſolute ſubmiſſion to his Conduct: But let us beware of truſting to his imputed Righteouſneſs, without Real Holineſs; leſt we obtain only imputed Salvation, and fall into Real Condemnation. And on the other ſide, let us beware alſo that we rob him not of our due Acknowledgments: for what the Apoſtle ſaith of Faith in Abſtract, is no leſs true of it in Conjunction with Holineſs. *By Faith working by Love we are ſaved, and that, not of our Selves, it is the Gift of God.*

III. It is exalted above and againſt Charity, which it is its Duty and Honor to ſerve. We have found one of the great Ends of the Goſpel to be the advancement of the Divine Life, whereof Charity is ſo great a part (if we may call it a Part) that however great and many Things are ſpoken of *Faith*, greater are ſpoken of *Love*. The Apoſtle is expreſs in giving This the precedence, *And now abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity, theſe three, but the greateſt of theſe*

is

is Charity. More yet, he plainly declareth that Faith dependeth on it for its saving power, *In Christ Jesus nothing availeth but Faith working by Love.* And that this work may reach not our Lord only, but our Brother too, he exhorteth the Ephesians to it by This Argument, *There is one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism:* But experience too plainly proveth, that whatever force *Unity of faith* may have for *Unity of spirit in the bond of peace*; the same hath multiplication of Articles of Faith, for dividing of minds by Schisms and Feuds. For while the Christian World had but *one Faith*, their mutual Love was the wonder and envy of their Enemies: but from the time that it received Additionals, and every new Doctrin became a new Religion, the mutual hatred of several Sects hath been no less wonderful.

For so much greater regard hath every one for his particular Belief (which he calleth his Religion) than for that General Faith wherein All agree; that his Neighbours Dissent therein, weigheth more Against Charity, than his Agreement in the greatest Truths can do for it.

The Good Emperors Argument was no less Unprosperous and Pious, whereby he endeavoured to cool the heat of the contending Parties, in the first and most uncharitable Dispute that ever rent the Christian World: *Philosophers*, said he, *though in many things they Differ, yet while they agree in the main, do not hate one another for their differences in Few things, but Love one another for their Agreement in the rest; and why should not We do so, who profess a more loving Religion?* If we seek the solution of this Riddle only from the nature of Faith, or from Scripture or Reason, we shall never get satisfaction; but as soon as we cast our eye upon the Interests and Pretences of the Church of *Rome*, we immediately meet it. For when Doctrins are Multiplied and Entangled, and men wheedled into apprehensions that their Salvation dependeth upon their right belief in every one of them; then will they be glad to shelter their unsatisfied Consciences in the bosom of That Church, which promiseth them safety: But if any be so bold as to question That Fundamental, and thereby shake the power and greatness which is built upon it, however Slight the Matter of the question be, the very questioning of the Churches Determinations is damnable, the man is an Heretick, and as an Heretick he must be handled. He must be cast into the Inquisition-prison, there he must languish in Darkness and Nastiness, in Hunger and Cold, and all kinds of Misery, until the season come for an *Act of Faith*, (for by that Title they express their *Oyer* and *Terminer*, which is mostly but *triennial*:) then is the Wretch put upon his Trial, and if found Guilty, he is arrayed in a Coat painted with Fire and Devils, wherein he is burnt alive; and the people are made to believe, that after death he must suffer in Hell what is so represented in his Coat, and executed upon his Body; and he must lose what all other Malefactors enjoy, the charity of their Prayers.

This they call an *Act of Faith*, and is solemnly executed upon as many as that Holy Court of Inquisition can get into their Pounces.

God be blessed, those curst Cows have short Horns; That Court reacheth not all Countries, but the uncharitableness of *Rome* doth. There is no reproach so great as that of Heretick: to be out of the Bosom of the Church, is to be out of Gods Favour, he is hated of God, and must be so of all that love God.

Such is the effect of multiplying Articles of Faith.

IV. It

IV. It is exalted above and againſt REASON: and ſo deſtroyeth the foundation whereon it ſelf is built: For we have found this to be the eſſential Virtue of Faith, that it is Juſtice to Gods Faithfulneſs: and This is therefore moſt Juſt, becauſe moſt Reaſonnble.

Nor is it leſs true in the retail: Nothing is to be believed further than Reaſon proveth it to be True. Our Lord himſelf appealed to it for the belief which he required: He pleaded his Miracles for Evidence, and thence claimed Judgment.

Yea, thoſe who require us to renounce our Reaſon, appeal to it to themſelves: For they pretend to give us reaſon why we ſhould renounce it, and ſo contradict themſelves no leſs than they do Reaſon. They are indeed no better than the ravings in *Bedlam* which we hear: It was a caſt of *Tertullian*'s Montaniſm which tranſported him into ſuch extravagance as to ſay, *Credo quia impoſſibile eſt*. And the Author of *Religio Medici*, when he ſaid, *There are not Contradictions enough in Religion for an Active Faith*, might have remember'd, that exceſs of Confidence in defect of Reaſon, is a certain Symptom of Madneſs.

It is true, in all Subjects, in all Arts and Sciences, Reaſon is pleaded for Error; but again it is confuted by greater Reaſon, as Stars are by the Sun, which baffleth and ſilenceth their weaker Light.

Abraham believed in Hope Againſt Hope. It appeared impoſſible in Nature that *Iſaac* ſhould be a Father after he were ſacrificed: but it appeared more impoſſible, that God ſhould lie, than that he ſhould do more than Nature: What I know to be the Word of God, I believe infinitely, becauſe I infinitely know God to be infinitely true: But that This is God's Word, and This the Meaning of it, I So far only believe, as I find Reaſon for it: For as in Juſtice to God's revealed Word, I am bound to pay it my utmoſt belief; ſo in Juſtice to his Word written in my heart, I am to refuſe my belief till ſome evidence make it appear due.

You ſay, Religion hath *Myſteries*; let us therefore conſider what a *Myſtery* is. In the Old Teſtament we find not the word: in the New, we find it conſiſt of two parts; the One Open, the Other Secret. Sometimes it ſignifieth a Spiritual Truth wrapt up in a Senſible; thus the Union of Chriſt with his Church, is a Myſtery contained in that of a Man with his Wife. Sometimes a truth hidden from ſome *Ages*; thus St. *John* proclaimeth the Goſpel to have been *hidden from the beginning*, but then *made manifeſt*: Or from ſome *Perſons*; thus our Lord ſaith to his Diſciples, *to you is given to know the Myſteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables.*

And this is the moſt uſual Senſe of the word in *Pagan* Writers, and from them with ſome other of their Conceits, entertained by ſuch Ages of the Church as are held in great veneration. The *Myſta* knew ſome Rules for Religious Worſhip, which he learned from Books locked up in Archives, not acceſſible to the people; The Fathers of the Chriſtian Church at firſt ſo imitated them, as to hide from the Catechumens the Rites of Sacraments, which from thence took the name of the Myſteries; and herein they were ſo cautious of concealing the form of adminiſtring the Euchariſt eſpecially, that they durſt not commit the words to writing, ſo much as in a Letter to a Biſhop, leſt they might by ſome accident fall into uncapable hands. And after-ages came cloſer up to their pattern, by telling the Laity, that implicit Faith in the Church muſt ſatisfie them in Myſteries of Faith.

So the word plainly importeth two contrary Aſpects upon two different Perſons; hid to the one, and open to the other: But that it ſhould at the ſame Time, and to the ſame Perſons, be both hid and open, is more than a hidden Myſtery; it is an open Contradiction, and it is no leſs ſo, that I muſt believe what is hidden from my underſtanding.

If the Goſpel profeſs itſelf to be a Revealer of Myſteries, then, to tell me, that it concealeth ſome Truths as Myſteries, yet requireth me to believe them; this is no leſs a calumny upon the Goſpel, than an abuſe of the Word.

He that telleth the Laity, that they muſt be ſatisfied with implicit Faith in the Church, ſpeaketh the language of a Pagan Myſtagogue; but a faithful Preacher of the Goſpel muſt juſtifie himſelf to his People in the language of St. *Paul* to the Elders of *Epheſus*, *I have kept back nothing that was profitable for you.*

Some may judge of ſuch a Church as boaſteth of Myſteries, by what is written in *Rev.* 17. and take That for a ſummary Anſwer to our preſent Enquiry, concerning the *changes which later Ages have made in the Faith and Church of Chriſt*: From ſimple Nakedneſs, to Gold, Purple, Scarlet, and precious Stones; from plain Truth preached and believed by the meaneſt, to Myſteries; from the moſt affectionate *love*, to *drunkenneſs with the blood of Saints*; from the chaſt Spouſe of Chriſt, to a *great Whore, and Mother of Harlots.* But what Truth may lie in ſuch a cenſure, we may find more fully by our next Enquiry.

ENQUIRY III.

What Damages or Advantages have enſued upon the Changes and Additions which later Ages have made in the Goſpel?

THis Enquiry is double, and requires a Ballance, that in one Scale we may lay the *Damages*, in the other the *Advantages*, and ſo weigh the one againſt the other.

Firſt then, we will conſider the *Damages*, and Them in relation to Three ſubjects:

1. *To our Lord and his Goſpel.*
2. *To private Chriſtians in particular.*
3. *To the Chriſtian Church in general.*

I. *To our Lord's Honour*, theſe Changes bring as great Damages, and in as proper a ſence, as any contumelious Doctrines can: They repreſent him not as a good and wiſe Prince, whoſe Laws tend to the happineſs of his People; but as a capricious and humorous one, that without any other motive than his unaccountable Will, impoſeth a ſtupid belief, of a multitude of impertinent and incredible Propoſitions, without, yea (ſome of them) againſt all Reaſon, without any other fruit but (what he moſt hateth) ſtrife, contrary to that ſimplicity wherein the Goſpel glorieth, and to the contempt which God himſelf ſheweth to acts of meer underſtanding.

In reference to the Animal Life, we find that he meaſureth to us Knowledge by our Needs. Though we can hardly know any thing to the bottom, yet we know ſufficient to anſwer the requires of our life. Thouſands of Years paſſed, before it was queſtioned, whether the Earth or the Sun move, and it is ſtill a queſtion. The

Discoveries of the Telescope and Microscope are new, yet do they both shew us admirable News, one in a multitude of unthought of Stars, the other in a World of Wonderful pretty Beauties: And the many Discoveries which Anatomy hath lately made in our Bodies, do not so much contribute to our knowledge as our wonder, nor at all instruct us in the Operation of our Bodies or Minds. The same Conduct is visible in reference to Spiritual Life: Our Lord hath plainly revealed, and required us to believe, what is sufficient for the Divine Life; but in Questions no way serviceable thereto, Innocence, Ignorance, yea, and Error, will no more destroy our Souls, than an Error in Philosophy will our Bodies.

But that he should require exact and confident belief in every Question, which a ranging invention can startle; that he should by his Apostle require us to *avoid foolish questions, as knowing that they gender strife*, yet to believe the truth in every one of them; that to prevent our mistakes in such forbidden Questions, he should establish an Oracle, which at pleasure might coin them into Articles of Faith; these are such Contradictions both among themselves, and to the Wisdom of God, that no Error can be more dishonourable to him, than so vile a conceit of his conduct.

If further we descend to particulars, take an Inventory of the thus imposed new Articles of Faith, their irreconcileable opposition with the plainest Sence and Reason, their impudent pimping for the Priests Interests, their extravagant impertinence to any other end, *&c.* and then compare such a Gospel, with that gracious one which our Lord and his Apostles preached; we shall find greater cause of wonder, that the Professors of Christ's Religion should so impudently corrupt it, than that God should so change his countenance toward it, as in our Introduction we saw reason both to complain and justifie.

The Faith which at first prevailed over the World, was no less suitable to the *Nature*, than to the *Needs* of Mankind. That every Man needed a *Mediator* between a holy God and himself, every man's own guilty conscience convinced him; that *the Son of God came into the world*, to perform that necessary Office, promising pardon and everlasting life to those that would believe in him as such; was a Doctrine so easie to the understanding, so welcome to the desires, and so obligingly offered, that as soon as it courted the World, it won upon it.

But had the Apostles brought the modern Gospel either to the learned *Greeks* or rude *Barbarians*, told them, that God had sent his Son into the World to save them that would believe, not only in Himself, but in his Vicar too; should they then have opened their Packs of impertinent Mysteries, declared that some men thereto first qualified by a few words, should afterward by other five words turn a bit of Bread into the Body of God, which himself and others must first worship, and then eat, *&c.* If such stuff as this had been preached, and such credulity as cannot be justified from folly, made the condition whereon men must hope to be justified from all their sins; what considering Man would not rather stick to the Religion of his Fathers, whatever it were, than change it for one so much worse?

Yes! such a Religion must appear much worse than any other; for the

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Apologists, who upon this Topick pleaded for the Christian Religion against the Pagan, though they sufficiently exposed the gross Follies of the later, yet could not charge it with so many and gross ones, as those which swarm in that one Doctrine of Transubstantiation; nor hath *Mahomet*, among all his Whimsies, any thing comparable to it.

What wonder now that the Gospel cannot gain any Country upon Heathenism, and hath lost so many to Mahumetism? yea, what wonder if in its own bowels it suffer so much by Atheism? What wonder that no Religion is so much pestered by it as the Christian, no Country so much as that, where this Oracle hath its seat?

When a bold person heareth his Teacher avow, that it were as good be of no Religion at all, as of any other than That, of whose Corruptions he is convinced, (though to an indifferent understanding nothing be more incredible, yet) his Lust will soon perswade him to take the Doctor at his word, and reject all Religion for the sake of the corrupt one.

If therefore Heathenism, Mahumetism, or Atheism, be enemies to the Gospel; the Changes which later Ages have made in it, must be imputed to their Authors, as so many Trespasses against it, and be condemned in suitable Damages.

II. As the changes made in the Faith are dishonourable to our Lord and his Gospel, so are they *pernicious to the Church of Christ*, both in its *particular Members*, and its *Publick Body* as the Spouse of Christ.

1. *They are pernicious to private Christians*, by robbing them of much of that happiness which the Gospel is designed to bring them, which we have found to be, 1. *Participation of the Divine Nature*; 2. *Fulness of Joy*.

1. They rob good men of much of *that Godliness*, which otherwise they should have attained. The Apostle beseecheth us *as strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*. That War is made by Diversion: *Wine and Women take away the heart*; they divert the Soul from labouring for the Divine Life, to wallowing in the brutish; and were it possible to compute how much mischief every Lust doth this way, we should certainly find that no One, nor (perhaps) All together, would be found so pernicious as this One Lust of Disputing and Imposing: For by this One, all the rest are so far strengthened, as our Forces are diverted from warring against them.

The more we dispute against our *Brethren*, the less we dispute against our *Lusts:* that ardor of Zeal, which else would have flamed up in Divine Love, mouldereth away in the black smoaky heats of bitter Zeal.

Very happy sure must the great Disputers be, whose Lusts are so mortified, that can spare so much of their Time and Affections, to be plaid away at this push-pin: or very unhappy, if they waste so much of them both, while their Lusts remain unconfuted: yea, they are unhappy if, having baffled their Lusts, they lose so much of Joy, and of encrease in Godliness, as with the same labor, and infinitely greater benefit, they might have purchased.

The greatest part of mankind (we see) hath not souls large enough to entertain both sorts of Zeal: but look how much there is of zeal for what they think Faith, against what they call Heresie, so much is lost from

Love of God and our Neighbour, and from Reformation of the most mortal Errors of our Lives.

2. They rob good men of that *fulneß of joy* which is the design of the Gospel. *The wicked* (saith the Prophet) *are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.* If it be miserable to be tossed with storms, then are Disputes in matters of Faith miserably pernicious; not only by hindering mens minds from warring against the lusts which raise those storms, but by raising others no less tempestuous, between Faith imposing things incredible, and Reason resisting such Impositions.

Where is that considering person who escapeth those storms? There are that tell us stories of the Roman Priests themselves, that they frequently confess, that all their struglings cannot subdue their Reason to a belief of the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, and that their Confessors also in their turns confess the same to their Confessors; but cannot either give or receive such Penance as can remove the incurable evil. What conflicts must such contrary winds necessarily raise in a soul infinitely desirous and equally unable to believe!

Moralists promise us Peace and Joy if we subdue our Lusts. Apostles upon better warrant make us the same Promises. Alas! now we find another, and that an invincible Enemy, made of that very Friend, by whose help we were to have obtained that Victory. By help of good Reason, assisted by God's Grace, we may subdue our Lusts; but how shall we subdue our Reason, which as it is our own Nature, without which we cannot be men, so it is the Image of God, and like its Original, Immortal and Invincible? Must we deface God's Image that we may partake his Nature? Fight against him *in effigie*, that we may obey him in his Vicar? This were to perform contradictions that we may believe them, and we shall find the one no less above our strength than the other; but after all endeavours, either to satisfie or stupifie our minds, we shall never be able to quiet them.

A hard warfare indeed! First by our Reason we must fight against our Lusts; and then by Faith we must fight our Reason; which yet we must find Invincible, and so the War desperate.

Is it thus, *the peace of God passeth all understanding*? Must we out-run *all understanding*; that we may overtake *Peace*? Is it thus, that *believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious*? Or is this the *good fight of Faith*, which we are by the Apostle encouraged to fight, and by experience find unprosperous?

Another, and no less unhappy War, do these additional Doctrines raise toward our Brethren, whom they tempt us to hate and persecute, under pretence of answering St. *Jude's* alarm, *to contend earnestly for the Faith.* Something of this we have seen under the consideration that *Faith is exalted above Charity*, and something more we shall see in observing the mischiefs which accrue to the Church of Christ in its *publick capacity*, to which therefore we hasten without stop at the mutual Enmities between private Christians, however visible and lamentable.

III. The next subject of damage is the *Church of Christ in its general capacity*: and this indeed is concerned in all the rest. For the Community, which is the Catholick Church, is the

Spouse

Spouse of Christ, whose happiness is the adequate end of the Gospel, whose every Promise and Precept is imployed as a Means to serve it, and therefore whatever crosseth this good design, if it come from our Lord, must dishonour his Conduct.

Again, the Catholick Church is a Body compact of single Members, whose several happiness or pain affecteth the whole.

Whether our Lord hath been faithful or defective in his care for the happiness of every particular, and the whole Community, how shall we examine? If by his own and his Apoles Precepts, no Religion in the world could ever vie with the Gospel, either in Precepts or Arguments for the dearest love, the greatest happiness of the Church, as well Triumphant as Militant: If by the practice of its Professors, none ever stirred up such mutual Quarrels among private persons, such cruel Persecutions by Princes, such bloody Wars between Nations.

Our Lord indeed appointed it for an Incendiary, but its fires were to be those of the most ardent Love: it is from the Corruptions of later Ages, that those lambent flames are by bitter zeal changed to devouring fires. Our Lord's great Apostle saith, that *in Christ Jesus nothing availeth but faith working in love*; but his pretended Vicar saith, Nothing availeth but Faith working by Zeal, and the best Zeal is the most bitter.

The Armies which blind zeal raised for the recovery of the Holy Land from Infidels, have been diverted by this *bitter zeal*, for the corrupters of the Christian Faith, against the opposers of those Corruptions; and pardon of sin promised to such as should lose their lives in so holy a cause; wherein how many have been destroyed, who can compute? Some have done their endeavours, who give us this account.

Of *Albigenses* and *Waldenses* slain nine hundred thousand: From thence to the Reformation no man hath set down the account of them that have been cut off, partly by fire, partly by sword, partly by other torments. From the beginning of the *Jesuits* to the Year 1580. in little more than thirty years, *Balduinus* noteth almost nine hundred thousand put to death by the alone hand of the Executioner. The D. of *Alva* gloried in the slaughter of six and thirty thousand in *Belgium*, only in a a few years. *Vergerius* witnesseth, that the Inquisition, in scarce thirty years, consumed a hundred and fifty thousand by several kinds of torments. We cannot stop our ears or eyes so hard, as to avoid the lamentable sight and complaints of our next Neigbours suffering (under him that calleth himself *the most Christian King*, and glorieth in the atchievement) more than any, yea than all the primitive Christians suffered under those whom our Fathers call'd cruel Persecutors, but this comparison will represent as mild Princes.

Astonishment and grief here stop us; we therefore turn to examin what weight the other Scale carrieth.

II. *What advantages accrueth by the changes which later Ages have made in the Faith of the Gospel.*

Here we must crave the grant of two Suppositions.

1. *That the Clergy in opposition to the People, and the Church of* Rome *in opposition to all other Churches, is Christ's Spouse, and consequently what is gained to that Spouse is gained to Christ himself.*

2. *That the temporal advantages which accrue to that Spouse may be equivalent to the souls which may be lost to purchase them.*

Unless these two small Concessions may be granted, we have not a word

to

to say; but if they be, that Church will shew such gains, as if they fall short of the full value, yet shall be sure to avoid the complaint of *David*, that they *sell God's people for nought, and take no money for them.* It is confessed, *money* in kind, is not so properly the gain made by this part of the Gospel, yet may it be reduced hither: for were not mens understandings muffled by implicit Faith, they could never be so grosly cheated as they are in the Doctrines of Repentance. But that *house of merchandise* we may take another time to visit; at present we are in pursuit of a nobler game, *Honour* and *Power*; and in these we shall divide the gains as we did the damages. For as in those we considered what accrued to God, and what to man; so in these we shall *what is gotten to the Pope as Christ's Vicar, and what to inferior Priests as his Officers.*

I. The *Pope*, under the Character of *Christ's Vicar*, by changes and additions made in the Faith of the Gospel, hath gotten that boundless Honour and Power, to which otherwise he hath no pretence.

It is not a word or two of our Lord, strained beyond the mind of the speaker; it is not his *Pasce oves*, or *Tu es Petrus*, that can move a serious man, to any thing but astonishment at such boldness, as dares with intolerable impudence burlesque our Lord's words; but is the pretended necessity of an *infallible Chair*, which hath advanced that Bishop, not only above all other *Bishops*, but above all *Princes* in the world.

For what can set a strand to that Power which can impose upon mens belief without bounds? What can make such an exorbitant Power credible, if the *Need* appear not great as the *Absurdity*? And what colour of such *Need*, if the bounds of Faith be not enlarged, beyond those narrow ones which our Lord set? But when matters of belief are so multiplied, that it is impossible for a man of ordinary business in the world, not only to *understand* them, but even to *number* them; when in most of them, sometimes two, sometimes more parties, contend with equal confidence; and can be brought to no other agreement but in this, that they cannot be too zealous for the Truth; what is this, but a state of war between the Disputants, and of doubts in the by-standers? and how can Peace be obtained without a living Arbitrator?

Thus the disputacity of Doctors made an infallible Chair appear necessary, and those who sit in that Chair, have so far made it infallible, as to determine what is most advantageous to themselves; for they have thereby gained Honour and Power, boundless as their Matters of Faith, and incredible as their Mysteries.

Their (*a*) Canon-law declareth and pretendeth to prove, by *Gen.* 1. that the *Pope is as much greater than the Emperor as the Sun is than the Moon*; and (*b*) *so much better than other Kings, as Gold is better than Lead.* This is modest, if their Power in imposing Faith, be more arbitrary than that of Emperors and Kings in imposing Taxes.

Their Supremacy over other Bishops is derived from the same Fountain. The same unhappy controversie which made others *disputacious*, made the Bishop of *Rome* Supreme. The gain that he made of the entertainment, which he so often gave to *Athanasius* and his Party, was this: He thence took advantage to claim a negative in Councils, and afterward the sole power of determining Controversies out of Council. And how much he must be above the rest of mankind, who is so much above all other Bishops, we may (I was about

(*a*) *Greg. de major. & obed. c. solitæ.* (*b*) *Distinct. 96. c. duo sunt.*

about to say compute) admire by the next part of our enquiry, the gain of the Priests.

II. The Priests have exalted themselves above the People, as much as the Pope above all Princes and Bishops. That they might keep the Laity at greater distance, they have doubly abused them; first by multiplying and entangling the Doctrines of Faith, and then by with-holding the Light that should clear them: At the same time *surfeiting* them with a glut of Doctrines, and *starving* them with a famine of the Bread of Life. So the Gospel is to them both kinds of Wilderness; bare as the Sands of *Africk* (without Path or Land-mark) for want of Scripture; yet thick-wooded as the Hills of *Zeilan* (whose Bushes none can creep through) by multitudes of Doctrines: So that those whom Education hath enabled to understand the Language wherein the Scripture was written, find Scholastick Divinity so overgrown with briars, that they think it better, and are willing to believe those who perswade them so, to lie in ease and ignorance, taking Images for their Books, and Priests for their Oracles, than tire themselves with such entangling studies.

Yea, which is yet more intolerable, they keep the People ignorant, not only of God's Word to them, but of their own to God, locking up their own publick Prayers in the same unknown Tongue with the Scriptures. *Ignorance* (say they) *is the Mother of Devotion:* It is so; but of devotion toward the Priest, not toward God; for where there is no light in the understanding, what heat can there be in the affections? What devotion without love, and what love without some knowledge of the object? St. *John* telleth us, *We love God, because he loved us first,* but then he supposeth we know it. St. *James* requireth, that *we pray in faith,* but he supposeth we know what we ask. But if I depend upon the Priest, both for God's word to me and mine to God, what is he less than God's Oracle, and how much more than my Mediator? And upon either office, the claim that he maketh to my greatest reverence will be as just as it is insolent, which that it is sufficiently, appears by these their demands:

Stanislaus Onicharius saith, That a *common Priest is as much better than a King, as a Man is better than a Beast*; yea further, That *as far as God Almighty doth excel a Priest, so much doth a Priest excel a King* (a). If you desire to know what particular Beast, *Gaspar Schioppius* will inform you: *Lay-men* (saith he) *are Asses, Mules, or Horses; the Romanist a tame Ass, the Heretick a wild one* (b). *Catholick Kings are the Leading-asses with Bells,* Reges Catholici sunt asini cum tintinnabulo.

Thank them heartily! We *Hereticks* are the wiser, that keep ourselves (*wild,* as they call it) free, as Nature made us; not suffer ourselves to be sadled, laden with burdens, whereof we know nothing but the heaviness, driven we know not whither, nor why, and lashed by insolent Masters. Such usage is enough to make those turn wild, whom Education hath tamed.

The Proverb telleth us, That *did the Horse know his own strength, he would not endure such usage as now he doth:* And what hindereth us from knowing the strength of our own mind? We have the same Scripture, we have the same Faculties whereby to understand it, and we have more certainty of our own sincerity than we can have of our Masters: what hindereth us from taking the blessed King's advice, not to take our Religion from other

(a) *Chimera, fol.* 97. (b) *Ecclesiasticus, cap.* 147. mens

mens Traditions, but our own Judgments?

If we can have the boldneſs to believe this, which even our Riders cannot deny, that nothing can be matter of ſaving Faith, but what the Author of our Faith made ſo; and that the Scripture hath faithfully informed us of what he ſaid in that great point; we may ſoon know ourſelves to be no leſs infallible than the Pope pretendeth to be: And if we can as eaſily ſhake off the loads which our Luſts impoſe, as thoſe which the Schoolmen do; we may then enjoy that true liberty, whereof our Redeemer ſaith, *If the Son make you free, you ſhall be free indeed.*

The CONCLUSION.

THE end of all is to determine between Faith *and* Love, *as our Lord did between God and Cæſar,* Give unto Faith the things that are Faith's, and unto Love the things that are Love's; *to Faith its due Bounds, and to Love its due boundleſneſs; to Faith the praiſe of a good Servant, and to love the honour of a good Lord; to Faith the power of advancing Love, but not of reſtraining it. For thus doth the Apoſtle extend it,* Do good to all, eſpecially to thoſe that are of the houſhold of Faith: *Which Houſhold alſo the ſame Apoſtle extendeth to* All which confeſs the Lord Jeſus, and believe that God hath raiſed him from the dead. *And if any (not ſatisfied with their place in the Houſe) will needs build themſelves Hutts of* Wood, Hay, *or* Stubble, *it will deſtroy their Works with ſuch Fires as ſhall ſpare their Perſons.*

This is the ſingular Honour of the Reformers of our Church, this maketh it the beſt conſtituted Church in the World, that in her departure from the Corruptions of Rome, *ſhe departed not from Charity.*

We are now conſidering none of her Conſtitutions, but thoſe which concern Faith, which both in the Office for Baptiſm, and that for Viſitation of the ſick, ſhe plainly declareth not to extend beyond the ſimpleſt of all the Creeds: whence it muſt neceſſarily follow, that if any where elſe ſhe have ſaid or inſtituted any thing, that may appear repugnant to thoſe declarations, it muſt be thereby interpreted, and imputed to her imitation of the great Apoſtle's Conduct, becoming a Papiſt to the Papiſts, that by all means ſhe might gain ſome of the Papiſts. *For this good reaſon, in her Liturgy ſhe kept their beſt Collects, whatever was juſtifiable in their Litany, and all their Creeds; in her Rubricks, many of their Feaſts, moſt of their Faſts, and ſome of their Ceremonies: And the ſucceſs juſtified this conduct, till a Bull from* Rome *blaſted the Fruit which ſuch fair Bloſſoms promiſed.*

But ſince that time, as ſhe hath gotten none from Rome, *ſo hath ſhe on the other ſide loſt many of her own, whoſe narrower Souls could not ſwallow ſuch things, as were in no other relation valuable, but what they carried to ſo good an end; and now more than a hundred years experience calleth upon the ſame Charity, to tack about and ſteer a contrary courſe. It is a general Rule and practiſed by all good Phyſitians, to obſerve whether their Preſcriptions do more good or hurt; nor would he be faithful either to his Patient or Profeſſion, that ſhould obſtinately ſtick to his firſt Orders, in contradiction to experience. It hath pleaſed our Gracious King to Invite and Authorize the Prelates and Repreſentatives of our Church, to practiſe the ſame Charity toward our diſtempered Church and State; and it will be a great diſappointment both to His Majeſty and his good People, if ſo glorious an Opportunity prove fruitleſs: nor will thoſe who glory in the Character of* Church-of-England-men *make good their claim to it, if they really diſhonour her by renouncing her ſpirit of Charity, ſuppoſing to honour her by their ſtiffneſs to thoſe Conſtitutions, whoſe very Authors (were they now living, and true to their own Reaſon) muſt be willing to aboliſh them.*

FINIS.